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THE GREAT ESSENTIALS OF THE CHRISTIAN LIFE

BY

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to the Bishop of Western New York*

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TO THE LOVING MEMORY
OF MY SAINTED WIFE

whose wide reading and retentive memory,
whose unsparing, but kindly criticism,
and whose sweet Christian spirit
were my unfailing help and inspiration
for nearly half a century,

I DEDICATE THIS BOOK

P R E F A C E

What are the Great Essentials of the Christian Religion—the doctrines and duties of the Christian Life and Hope—is a question of profound and absorbing interest. To answer this question satisfactorily and within reasonable compass can but be looked at as an achievement well worth the undertaking.

Hitherto no writer, to the author's knowledge, has set himself to precisely this task, though many have covered the ground more or less fully over and over again; but not in a single treatise, or under a like head. If one should be asked, "Where may I find a book that will give me a clear and satisfactory outline or statement of the really essential doctrines of the religion of Jesus Christ, differentiating them from the near and non-essentials?" it is doubtful if one could give the desired information. It is to meet as well as he is able this desire and demand that the author ventures to offer this little treatise.

It will be said, no doubt justly, that no two minds perfectly agree as to what these essentials are; that while they might agree substantially on some points, they would differ widely on others, one

making essential what the other would call non-essential, or even of doubtful truth or merit. Recognizing the weight of this objection, the author has undertaken not only to name what he considers the great essentials, but also to show by facts and arguments why he regards them as essential.

The great desire of the author is to help honest inquirers after the truth to find a satisfactory answer to their yearnings without too long a period of searching, and at the same time make the excuse no longer tenable that they have not become Christians because they do not know what Christianity is. It is needless to say that the author lays little claim to originality in the contents of this book. Most of what he has to say has been said in substance many times by other writers and teachers. His chief claim to originality is indicated in the title of the book, that its claim is to treat of essentials only, not attempting to defend opinions or dogmas which may be good and true in themselves, but are not really necessary in order to be worthy of the Christian name. It is the belief and hope of the author that he has set forth the great essentials of Christianity in an order and with sufficient clearness and fulness to leave no reader of ordinary intelligence in ignorance of what a

disciple of Jesus Christ is bound to believe and do to the best of his ability. There is no attempt to sound the depth, nor to elaborate, the whole content of Christian truth. The mystery of the Gospel must ever obtain, for it is profound beyond all finite thinking. If St. John could say that all the books in the world could hardly contain the things that should be written of the words and works of Jesus, how much more might it be said that the world is not big enough to contain all the books already written of Him, to say nothing of the books yet to be written. The purpose of this book is achieved if enough has been said to make plain to the ordinary reader and inquirer the great things necessary to be believed and done in the way of Christian endeavor.

Making little claim to originality of thought or argument, still the author is not conscious of using directly the material or method of others without giving some sort of credit to them, though he has not in every instance been able to give his authority for the fact recorded or the name of the author quoted. Footnotes have been avoided because the book is intended for the popular, rather than for critical, reading.

E. H. M.

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CHAPTER I

GOD THE GREAT REALITY

The Starting-Point of any essay or endeavor to set forth the Great Essentials of the Christian Life, or of Christian faith and duty, is the conception of the being of God. To the Christian God is the great Reality. If there is no God all is chaos and uncertainty. It goes without the saying that without the conception of God and belief in Him there can be no religion. The idea of God and religion are one and inseparable. The materialist, the agnostic and the positivist have no religion because they know no God or supernatural order of being in the universe. They know no world except the phenomenal, or that which appears to the natural organs of sense. The highest order of being or beings they know or care to know is man. Buddhism, it is true, is a religion, or is commonly reckoned so; for though it neither affirms or denies categorically the existence of a Supreme Being, it deifies Buddha and worships him as God. So the fact remains that some notion of a divine or supernatural Being is essential to the fact of religion.

But while belief in the existence of God is fundamental to the Christian life and hope, it is not

essential that one be able to prove beyond question that God actually exists. If that were requisite then no religion would be possible; for though there are many and strong arguments supporting the great doctrine, there is no proof which amounts to a demonstration, by removing all possible uncertainty. It is an old and true saying that God cannot be found at the end of a syllogism. Nor is it greatly to be desired that He should be found in such a formula or setting. For is not the mystery of Godliness an invaluable asset to true religion? His infinitude, His passing all understanding, is surely an attribute greatly to be desired in a Being worthy of all adoration and worship. “Canst thou by searching find out God? Canst thou find out the Almighty to perfection?” (Job 11,2).

But though we cannot prove by any dialectic or demonstration the certainty of the existence of God there are a number of arguments which theists have from time to time advanced in one form or another well worthy of consideration. A very brief statement of these arguments only will be attempted in this article.

The arguments which theists have dwelt upon at greatest length are commonly called the Cosmological, the Teleological and the Ontological. Other terminology is sometimes employed to give

these arguments expression and force, but the meaning is the same. Each one of them has no little merit and weight, and the three taken together leave little to be desired in the way of a dialectical or logical proof of the divine existence. They have, in fact, never been successfully answered by atheist or agnostic. Yet it cannot be claimed that they give absolute proof of the doctrine, though they certainly do leave the balance of probability decidedly in the affirmative.

The Cosmological argument for the existence of God maintains that the outward visible world is contingent and dependent. Its existence cannot be accounted for, or explained by evidences of any cause or force within itself. To account for its existence the human mind is compelled to fall back on the hypothesis of some original impetus or agency that does not appear, finding satisfaction and rest only in the idea or concept of some power above nature. How can we account for results so wonderful in the world of matter which to all appearance is inert and lifeless without some extrinsic power or force above or within it which is self-existent and infinite? On its face the question seems to admit of but one answer: there must be some energy in the universe worthy to be called Almighty God.

Now while this argument has its merit and appeals strongly to many minds, it is not without certain elements of weakness. The fact that we cannot account for the material world without the conception of a Creator does not prove necessarily the actual existence of a Creator; for the question at once arises. How shall we account for the Creator Himself? Whence comes He? How could He exist without being caused any more than the material world? No logical answer is possible. An uncaused cause may be possible, but it is inexplicable. So it must be concluded that the cosmological argument, taken alone, cannot be counted as a conclusive proof of the existence of God.

Yet as a step to other proofs and evidences the cosmological argument has its value. It cannot be characterized as a worthless or specious argument, though negative in character. It helps to the conception of some being or power greater than ourselves. Our minds tell us that there must be a Mind back of all greater than our own, and we naturally draw the inference that that superior Mind is not only supernatural, but uncaused and infinite. Therefore the cosmological argument is at least entitled to respectful consideration. Though not conclusive it is not to be cast aside as worthless.

The Teleological argument, or the argument from design, is another step toward scientific and logical proof of the existence of God. In studying the material and tangible world we do not find it a mere chance collection of parts or atoms—particles of matter sustaining little or no relation to one another. On the contrary we find many evidences of thoughtfulness and purpose in its formation and movements. Matter does not appear to be a heterogeneous conglomeration of elements, purposeless and meaningless. Earth and air and sky, light, heat and moisture, sunshine, rain and temperature, are so correlated and tempered that the ground is made to produce food and support for man and beast; life is sustained and ample provision is made for them to attain the end of their being. The evidence of a Divine Providence is so manifest that it is not easy to account for doubt on the part of any one as to the existence of a great Originator and Designer. On its face the proof seems compelling.

Yet it must be confessed that this argument has its vulnerable points. While there are many apparent evidences of supreme wisdom and purpose in the working out of human welfare and happiness, we see on the other hand a world of evil and contradiction,—perils on land and sea, de-

structive elements in nature; as lightning, tempest, earthquake and volcanic eruption; cruelty, brutality and ruthless destruction of life and property; useful and happy homes broken up and ruined by devastations of war, pestilence, famine, disease and accident; while desperate characters and worthless lives are left to live long to pursue their own way to the injury of those who live for a worthy purpose. Would an all-wise and infinite Designer order the evil as well as the good we see in the world? Is it possible to reconcile such diversity of facts and conditions with the conception of an infinite and benevolent Designer?

But the mistake of those who have proposed and urged this objection to the idea of design in the universe is that they have had a radically wrong and impossible conception of God. They have thought of Him as a supreme arbitrary and mechanical power, wholly transcendent; and standing in an attitude toward his universe as an inventor or mechanic stands to his machine, having absolute control of each and every several part, and therefore able to make it function perfectly and without variation.

Now if such a God could or ever did exist why did He not make a perfect world to begin with, a world incapable of physical or moral evil? Why

should He permit or suffer so much cruelty, inhumanity and destruction of life and property in the world? Could He not just as easily and readily have made a world free from every defect or possibility of error and every kind of evil?

But are we not assuming too much when we assume the existence of such a Deity? Do the facts of life justify such a conception of the Divine Being? Is there sufficient evidence of the presence of such a Power or Arbitrator in the universe? In the light of reason and observation the true God cannot be thought of as wholly transcendent and without restriction in the exercise of his attributes of authority and power. Such a conception cannot stand the test of sound thinking. We must think of God as immanent as well as transcendent. He is in his world, ever making his presence manifest; contending with conditions and problems which must arise continually in the very nature of things. There is no reasonable ground for concluding that the universe is under the absolute control of an arbitrary power able to change the order of nature at his option, and when He chooses leave it to itself to work out its own destruction. There is no evidence of the existence of a God who could have made every creature perfectly good and perfectly happy. It is an unreasonable conception.

We know that the most perfect organism in this world is not so perfect that it never fails and never can fail to overcome all opposition or interruption in working out its plans and purposes; that it sometimes fails to function to the best advantage. Take the organism of the highest known order of creation, that of man, for example. How perfect the normal child or youth! Every organ of sense is healthy and free to perform its function. Yet with all its perfection and promise it rarely succeeds in developing the highest ideals of manhood, physical, mental and moral. Now is it not reasonable to conclude that what the soul of man is to his material frame and environment, the soul of the universe must be to the universe itself? That Soul or Mind we believe to be and call God. He is in his world to work out the great end of its existence in the best possible way. In the nature of things it is attended with difficulties and complications commensurate with its greatness and vastness. But that does not prove the absence of design in creation. It only shows that the greatest and best possible world, conceived by the greatest Mind in the universe, encounters difficulties which can be solved and overcome only by a long process of creative power and energy.

The argument for the truth of religion from

design is much strengthened if not fully confirmed by a still further argument called the Ontological, or the argument from thought to being. Its claim is that the very thought or idea of God in the mind of men, that the human mind is able to conceive or grasp the idea of an infinite Mind in the vast universe, is strong proof of the Divine existence. How could any man ever have thought of God if there be no such Being? Baldly stated, as it has been by no less a thinker than Anselm, who goes so far as to aver that if so perfect a Being did not exist we would have to posit one to account for the universe, this argument is open to criticism, and it is not surprising that it has been repudiated and even ridiculed by rationalists and agnostics. They speak of the absurdity on its face of concluding the actual existence of a person or thing because we are able to conceive of it in our minds. They argue that there is no limit to the power of the imagination to conceive of objects which have no reality in fact. They cite the well-known saying of Kant, that "the notion of three hundred dollars in my mind is no proof that I have them in my purse." The argument presented in that way is its own refutation.

But the fairer and truer statement of this argument of the transition from thought to being

puts it in a very different and much stronger light. Though our minds are finite, the very fact of their finiteness implies their complement in an infinite Mind. What can our minds be but the reflection and expression in miniature of the infinite Mind, even as the light of the planets are the reflection of the light of the great central luminary of the solar system? As Principal Caird puts it in his *Philosophy of Religion*, (p. 159) "As spiritual beings our whole conscious life is based on a universal self-consciousness, an absolute spiritual life, which is not a mere notion on our part, but which carries with it the proof of its existence and reality." This way of stating the Ontological argument in the endeavor to prove the existence of God must appeal forcibly to every reasonable mind, and is quite satisfactory to many, though it can scarcely be said to amount to absolute proof. This much it certainly does; it puts the burden of proof to the contrary on those who deny or contest the truth of religion. How is one to account for one's own mind or power to think and resolve if there is no superior Mind from which to derive mind? How did mind, or ability to think, originate, if not from a Mind inherent in the universe? Is not the conclusion of the theist the more logical and rational? Is he not at the long end of the lever?

Another and striking argument for the being of God is what we may properly term the Biological. It pertains to the origin of life. It is the impossibility of accounting for vital energy—for either vegetable, animal or human life, without the conception of what the great French philosopher, Henri Bergson, calls “an original impetus of life.” All know that it has never been demonstrated, or proved by experiment, that life inheres in dead or inert matter. If it were possible to combine or blend in proper proportions all the chemical ingredients of plant or tree or bird by the ingenuity of man it would remain inanimate and lifeless. It would lack the vital impetus required to make it an organism, or thing of life. No man has ever been able to produce or discover that vital impetus or energy. The finite mind lacks the wisdom to create or supply it. The most perfect imitation in matter and form of a living being that he can possibly invent or contrive will be as dead as a door nail from his hand. It will never develop into a living force, or energy. It has been tried over and over again and as often failed.

The question therefore arises, how account for the vital impetus required to produce a living body or entity? Whence its origin or source?

What does Bergson mean by calling it an original impetus of life? He does not offer or suggest an answer to the query. He leaves the reader to form his own opinion. Can any one doubt that if this great modern philosopher should ever give his opinion he would be constrained to attribute it to the true and living God whom we worship? Could he, or any one of sound mind, think of this vital impetus as something less than a being of supernatural wisdom and power? If it is not God, then all we can say is that it ought to be. Surely the theist is on safe ground, ground that cannot be readily shaken.

If the above proofs and arguments for the existence of God are not sufficient to convince or satisfy honest inquirers and doubters, there is still another argument which must appeal very strongly, if not irresistably, removing all reasonable question. It is an argument, however, that does not belong to the category of proofs from nature or life, but to one that transcends them all. It is that the greatest moral and spiritual personality this world ever knew positively affirmed by word and deed the Divine existence. There was never any question as to his attitude of mind. He spoke as one who knew.

That such a man as Jesus called the Christ

actually lived in this world is now universally conceded by all students of history. Even his most pronounced enemies, those who reject Him as their Lord and Saviour, acknowledge his historical character. From all the records we have of Him He lived a life absolutely above reproach—was free from guile and fault in all his words and deeds. At the same time He was outspoken and fearless in his attitude toward all men, whether friend or foe. While meek and gentle and reserved in manner, He spake with an authority hitherto unknown in the religious world. “Never man spake like this man.” It was not self-asserted authority, like that of the scribes; but the authority that can come only from the truth within. His timely words carried conviction to every unbiassed mind; nor could his cleverest adversaries meet Him in controversy.

Now the point I have in mind is this: Could such a clear and profound mind, and withal so spiritual, be mistaken in his religious convictions? Would such a great soul spend whole nights in communion with an imaginary deity? Could He have been such a self-deceived fanatic? Impossible. On the contrary we have every kind of evidence that Jesus knew God as He knew his own soul. He seemed as conscious of the existence of God

as of his own existence. He seemed to know God perfectly from the beginning to the end of his ministry. Even at the age of twelve He spoke of God as his Father to the astonishment of Joseph, and Mary his mother. He never deemed it necessary to argue with men to prove the Divine existence. Rather He spoke as the oracle of God; and the people who heard Him and saw his mighty works felt that they were in the presence of the Invisible King.

Now in consideration of the foregoing facts and arguments do we not get a synthesis of proofs and evidences of the existence of God which leaves no reasonable ground for doubt? Do we need any fuller assurance? Can we honestly come to any other conclusion than that the God of Revelation is the great Reality on whom all are dependent and to whom we owe all that we have and all that we are? Are not the evidences of his being and claims upon us so strong as to bind us and all mankind to recognize Him as the true and living God and to make it the great business of our lives to love, honor and serve Him?

CHAPTER II

THE CHARACTER OF GOD—HIS FATHERHOOD

It is essential to the Christian life that one believe not only in the existence of God, but also that reasonable and exalted views be held of his nature and attributes. It is of course impossible for the finite mind to sound the depth or measure the breadth of the Infinite and Eternal. “Canst thou by searching find out God? Canst thou find out the Almighty to perfection?” Certainly not; but as intelligent, thinking beings, knowing right from wrong and good from evil, it ought not to be impossible for us to form just and reasonable ideas of what the great Author of our being must be. Add to this the fact that we have what purports to be, and bears on its face the evidence of being, an authoritative revelation of his character and attributes, it ought not to be beyond our capacity to arrive at just views of who and what He is.

Now it is revealed to us in Holy Scripture that God is both our Creator and Heavenly Father. There is implied in this conception that He is possessed with supreme wisdom, power and love. We cannot think of Him apart from these attributes. The very idea of one capable of being the most

high God in so vast a universe makes it impossible for us to conceive of Him as being less than the highest possible entity in all creative and moral perfections. There could not possibly be an imperfect Almighty. This would imply a self-contradiction.

As Creator we may not think of God as literally an architect or mechanic fully designing and planning his vast universe before commencing the work of construction. There is no evidence that this was the method of creation. The universe is not in appearance a mechanical contrivance, and cannot be reasonably looked upon as such in fact. It is rather an evolution or growth. It was not made in a day or in any period of time. The work of creation has been a continuous process from the beginning, the Creator and the Creation working and progressing as it were hand in hand. God is in the world as a wise Master Builder, thinking and planning and working out his purposes in the best way conceivable, eliminating and supplementing, adding and subtracting, even as a bird builds her nest and lays her young.

Is this an unworthy conception of the Author of the universe? Is this not to circumscribe Him in wisdom and power? Rather is it not to exalt Him to the highest possible plain of perfection?

The tribal and the mediaeval conception of God made Him a sort of a magician or machine of impossible resources, attributing to Him power and skill to do any and every imaginable thing, both the possible and the impossible, and all by the fiat of his word and will, making it perfect in an instant. Do the facts of nature and life, does reason itself, bear out such teaching? If He could have made all things perfect and complete from the beginning, we ask again, why did He not do it? What purpose could He have had in leaving so much imperfection in the world, entailing so much suffering and woe? Is it presuming too much to say that it was impossible in the nature of things that God could have done otherwise than He did, being the Soul of goodness as He must be? That God can do all right and necessary things there is no question, but not the impossible or self-contradictory. So in thinking of the wisdom and power of God we must not ask for or expect the impossible or unnatural. He works within and with his world with all available resources. Doubtless if He could have made every particular thing and every person absolutely perfect so that no natural or moral law and no Divine purpose would ever fail He would have done it. We cannot reasonably think of God creating evil,

or the conditions of evil, for its own sake, much less for the sake of showing his power in punishing it; or of permitting it for any purposes save to overcome or overrule it for the achievement of the highest and holiest ends. The truth must be that the possibility of evil and sin was involved in the best possible world, so that it is not to limit the wisdom or power of God to say that He could not prevent the entering of either physical or moral evil into his world. It is simply to recognize as true what is patent to every thoughtful man that it is not within the power of even the Infinite to do the impossible.

As to the other attribute of God named in this article, that of Love, it is of the greatest possible importance that every one receive it as vital to his faith. It is of the very essence of the Divine Being. "God is love," said the chief of mystics among the chosen Twelve. Jesus was ever most pronounced in teaching the truth of the Divine love and compassion. In parable and similitude, as well as in more direct and explicit language, He proclaimed it over and over again. It was particularly associated with his doctrine of the Fatherhood of God. There is no truth that Jesus insisted on more than this attitude of God toward his moral creation. Indeed this may be said to be his most

distinctive contribution to monotheism. The sovereignty of God was recognized and taught by the great prophets and exponents of religion centuries before Jesus came into the world, but the conception of his nature as the Universal Father had scarcely so much as dawned on the human consciousness. He was dread Jehovah rather than the all-gracious Heavenly Father. He was thought of as a God most exacting, and slow to forgive transgression.

It is true that the great lawgiver, Moses, taught a more lenient doctrine of the nature of God; yet even he reminded Israel that Jehovah was a jealous God, visiting the iniquities of the fathers upon their children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hated Him.

This contribution of Jesus to monotheism cannot be too highly esteemed, or too fondly cherished. It reveals the true relationship of the Creator to the creature. We know how precious the family relation is to most of us. A united family is the ideal and pledge of happiness in this world. It is next door to heaven. When the family is invaded and divided by a secret or open enemy there is little left in that family to make life worth living. Now if God is our Father and recognized as such, there is little possibility of the family relation ever

breaking entirely up, for the Infinite Father could never forsake his children however far they may wander astray. He is the Father of the most wayward and prodigal, and his hand is ever extended toward them, not willing that any should be lost. So the doctrine of the Fatherhood of God lays a claim upon our loyalty to Him much stronger than that of his relation to us as our Creator.

But how can one believe in the Fatherhood of one whom no eye has ever seen, and no ear has ever heard and whose loving arms no one has ever felt around him? The child knows only the father he has often seen and heard, whose voice is to him the sweetest music, and who is never so happy as when in his loving embrace. Is it possible to conceive of a Heavenly Father and to love Him as such, who is without bodily parts and who never shows his face or speaks in audible tones? It must be confessed that this is not an easy question to answer. Is it any wonder that the wisest and best men of old were slow in making the discovery? There were so many reasons for thinking of God as other than a Father—as a mighty power indeed—as a great Sovereign and Ruler—that it never occurred to the mind of man that He should sustain to his creatures anything of the nature

of Fatherhood. It was an impossible conception to the unaided mind of man. How, then, may one learn not only to believe in his Fatherhood, but also to love Him?

In order to throw some light on this proposition the following illustration is offered in the way of analogy: Is it not true that the real and true Father in the human family centers not in his face or form, nor yet in the sound or tone of his voice? There are men in every community, heads of families, appearing well outwardly, whose children scarcely recognize them as their father. Instead of running to them gladly on their return from business or other resort, sneak away and hide in terror from them. On the other hand there are fathers of rough exterior and with no outward attractions whatever, whose children fairly adore them, running with joy to meet and greet them and to receive their fond embrace as soon as they come in sight. What is it that draws instead of repels them on their approach? It is their amiable and winning qualities well known by past experience to their children, though quite invisible to the natural vision. Their children do not think of them as either plain or comely; they think only of the great heart they know to be within them. In like manner it is quite possible to think of God

as our Father because of those great loving qualities which most characterize Him. As such He has been revealed to us by those highly inspired souls who have spoken in His name.

But we are not dependent chiefly on our reasoning faculties, nor yet on the testimony of inspired apostles or prophets, to give us the assurance of the Fatherhood of God. We have what we believe to be the best possible witness to the blessed doctrine, removing all occasion for doubt.

This is not the place to take up the discussion of the doctrine of the Divinity of Jesus Christ; that is reserved for another chapter. But this much may be anticipated here, that whatever we may find ourselves justified in holding as to the nature of Jesus of Nazareth, we have abundant proof that He was the wisest, the most perfect and the most marvelous character the world ever saw or knew. There is no doubt that He was all He claimed to be and all He is represented as being in the brief biographies we have of Him in the Gospels. No great scholar or student of history today, of whatever school of thought or religion, questions the fact that such a person as Jesus, called the Christ, once lived in this world as a man among men, walked and talked with them, and taught substantially the doctrines and duties credited to Him

in those Gospels. It is of especial importance to keep this fact in mind in this connection, though it be a repetition.

Now we not only have the word of Jesus for the doctrine of the Fatherhood of God, we have also the witness of his own attitude towards God. In all his prayers of which we have any record we find Him invariably addressing God as Father, and that He taught his disciples to say, “Our Father,” when they prayed. He kept this idea continually before their minds. “Thy Father who seeth in secret shall recompense you,” “Your Heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things.” “It is the Father’s good pleasure to give you the kingdom.” Such was the whole tenor of his teaching in speaking to them of their duty towards God and their dependence upon Him. His faith in God as his Father seemed to come nothing short of positive knowledge.

From all this it is not only reasonable but altogether possible for one to believe in God as one’s Father and to rejoice in Him as such. To doubt it is to doubt the word of the purest and noblest being that ever lived on this footstool of God and to turn our backs on the most wholesome and glorious doctrine ever written or spoken. It is just the truth which our souls need and demand;

without which we grovel in uncertainty and fear and live to little or no purpose. We most naturally require it to stimulate and encourage us to persevere in right living, whatever may be our ideals of ends or motive. That we are morally bound to do right because it *is* right, regardless of the prospect of reward or punishment, is ever true; but who, without the feeling that God is loving and good and the fear of offending Him is always able to do it?

In confining the argument or discussion on the Character of God to his wisdom, power and love, it was not forgotten that He has other attributes that may not be ignored. Holiness, justice, righteous indignation and every other quality belonging to a complete moral nature inhere in God. He would not be a natural Father if He were all affection and never exacting. He is indeed slow to anger, but will by no means clear the guilty. He delights in showing mercy, but is not over-indulgent. While love is central in his nature, his wisdom leads Him to manifest it with discretion, while his almighty power enables Him to overcome all obstacles to the attainment of his ends.

And so we conclude that all the known attributes of God are implicit if not explicit in his wisdom, power and love. Omniscience, omnipresence

and omnipotence as well as holiness, justice and equity find their perfection in Him. All that mind can conceive, the sense of righteousness demand and the heart desire inhere in God. In Him there can be no lack.

CHAPTER III

THE GLORY OF THE FATHER—THE INCARNATION

In the preceding chapter it was shown how deeply we are indebted to Jesus of Nazareth for our knowledge of God in his relation to us as our Heavenly Father. The point was made that He was the first teacher practically to make this doctrine cardinal in the revelation of God; that this was his most distinctive contribution, so to speak, to monotheism. He kept this great and most welcome truth continually before the hearts and minds of his disciples. He showed manifestly that it was a doctrine fundamental to his ministry and mission; that it formed the basis of the Gospel of the Kingdom of Heaven. It was the great missionary motive of his preaching and teaching.

Now this being true it would seem to follow that Jesus must have sustained some unique relation to God not enjoyed by any other man who lived in this world. It involves nothing less than the doctrine of the Incarnation. It is the doctrine that the Son of God, begotten of the Father before all worlds, took upon Himself human nature, became flesh and blood, and lived among men as man, yet all the while was in his interior nature

and being something more than man. As St. John says, "The Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld his glory, glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth."

Incidentally, but none the less clearly, St. Paul gives utterance to the same doctrine in one of his epistles; "Have this mind in you, which was also in Christ Jesus; who being in the form of God, thought it not a thing to be grasped to be on an equality with God, but emptied himself, taking the form of a bond-servant, being made in the likeness of men; and being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, becoming obedient unto death, yea, the death of the cross. Wherefore also God highly exalted him, and gave unto him the name which is above every name; that in the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven and things on earth and things under the earth, and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father." (Phil. 2:5-11). It is the famous kenotic, or self-emptying passage, which has been wont to be looked upon as the apostle's interpretation of the logos doctrine of St. John in the first chapter of his Gospel. It is proof beyond a doubt that these two profound Christian mystics were in perfect accord on the doctrine of the Incarnation.

Now this doctrine of the Incarnation of the Son of God as set forth in the above passages from the writings of these apostles, has ever been reckoned by the Church throughout the world as cardinal and essential in our religion; and justly so. Individuals and cults that have persisted in denying its truth have not ordinarily been regarded as entitled to the Christian name. If Jesus Christ was not both Divine and human, if He was only one man among many, however great and good, then his word is no more authoritative and no more to be depended upon than that of other founders of religions, and the great sacrifice He made on the cross in our behalf counts for no more than the sacrifices made by many another great soul for the betterment of human conditions.

But while it is essential to Christian faith and duty that one accept and hold to the doctrine of the Incarnation, it is not positively required that one adopt a clearly defined theory of the doctrine, or maintain dogmatically the correctness of the gospel stories of the manner of our Lord's entrance into human life. In other words, the truth of the Incarnation does not absolutely depend on the accuracy of the first and third gospel accounts of the virgin birth of our Lord. We know that there are many learned and good men who profess to

believe heartily in the Incarnation who are not fully persuaded that the accounts given in these gospels of the miraculous conception and birth of the child Jesus are to be taken literally. Their contention is that as neither the oldest gospel, that of St. Mark, nor the fourth gospel, St. John, to whom the holy mother was committed at the cross, nor SS. Peter and Paul in any of their sermons or epistles make mention of the virgin birth of Jesus, therefore it is not important or incumbent that one receive implicitly and in every particular the testimony of Matthew and Luke, and that the fact of the Incarnation does not depend on the miraculous conception and birth stories. It is enough for them to know that Jesus lived a perfect life, that He taught with an order of authority manifestly higher than all other great teachers, that his works of power and love far surpassed those of all other men, that He suffered and died as a sacrifice for the sins of all men, and that He arose from the dead on the third day as He had assured his disciples He would. They judge the tree by its fruit, is their contention, not by the mode of its planting; and it cannot be denied that they make a strong case.

But in the opinion of the author the advantage of having and accepting the infancy stories is very

great. It gives an historic setting to the doctrine of the Incarnation that makes it something more than a theory or an ideal. It lays a foundation and forms a back-ground which accounts in some degree for the extraordinary life Jesus lived and the marvelous revelations of godliness He made. If the stories of the virgin birth are true in fact and substance then Jesus would seem to have claims for an intimacy with God, so to speak, that should make his word an infallible authority—to be depended upon as the veritable word of the Father. Without this historic setting there would indeed be much ground for belief in his divine Sonship; for the words He spoke and the life He lived have no parallel in history. All the great and good men of whose word and life we have record spoke at times with more or less doubt and uncertainty, and all betrayed points of weakness in character and deportment, coming short of living up to their high ideals. But Jesus never spoke with doubt or uncertainty, and He never betrayed the least moral or spiritual infirmity. His most subtle critics and enemies never found a vulnerable point of attack, though they tried it over and over again. Satan found nothing in Him. All this is true, and if we had no further word on which to build our faith in the Incarnation this should be

sufficient. But if in addition to this witness we have good reason for accepting the gospel stories of the unique manner of our Lord's entrance into human life, then we have a foundation to stand on as impregnable as the everlasting hills. The great doctrine of the Incarnation becomes something more than a pious opinion or theory. Its historic character removes it from the categories of speculation and criticism, leaving it no longer open to doubt or denial.

One argument urged against the historic verity of the gospel stories of the virgin birth of our Lord is that they do not agree with one another in important particulars. Matthew, e. g. fails to mention the shepherds' vision of the herald angel; nor does he tell of their early visit to the grotto stable in Bethlehem the morning of the holy Nativity, so beautifully portrayed by Luke, nor aught about the manger cradle and how it came that He was born there. On the other hand Luke tells us nothing of the visit of the Magi under the guidance of a star; the brutal edict of Herod to slay all the male children of Bethlehem and round about, nor the flight of the holy family into Egypt to escape the wrath of the king, nor of the actual murder of the innocents. In these details they report differently, though

there is no contradiction. In all the essential facts the two writers perfectly agree. They affirm with equal positiveness that the human parentage of Jesus was wholly on the side of his mother; that the Holy Spirit was his sole Pro-creator; that He was born in Bethlehem of Judaea; that some time later He was taken to the family home in Nazareth to spend his youth and early manhood, and that his name was called Jesus. Whatever the sources were from which the writers drew their facts, and it is evident that they were not the same, they both show that they had perfect confidence in their trustworthiness, and that they did not draw on their imagination to give color to the picture; much less did either of them paint a distorted picture of the Christ Child to make Him appear altogether different from other children, as did the writers of the Apochryphal gospels of later centuries. On the contrary their stories are most beautiful in their simplicity. Nothing could be more delicate or reverent in expression or portrayal. They clearly showed that they were anxious only to bear honest witness to what they believed to be credible reports of the unique manner of Jesus' entrance into human life, and they betray no motive or disposition to make the event more wonderful than it actually was.

The fact that Mark and John make no mention of the virgin birth of Jesus in their gospels proves nothing, because neither of them touches on his life till He was ready to enter upon his active ministry. Had they taken up his biography at its beginning and made no reference to the miracle, the point of this objection might have some force, but not otherwise. As a matter of fact the ministry of the Man they did portray was none the less a miracle than the one portrayed by Matthew and Luke, though they did not record the tradition of the virgin birth. His entire life was a miracle; in word and deed He presented a contrast to all other men in that He betrayed no weakness, mental or moral, and gave Himself entirely up to "going about doing good."

Now while the author of this treatise, after having read and examined without bias the arguments pro and con on the subject, finds unfeigned satisfaction in being able to accept the historic verity of the infancy stories as told by Matthew and Luke, he is far from denying that men may believe the doctrine of the Incarnation who cannot conscientiously receive them in their literalness. If the doctrine is a real living faith with them, as without doubt it is with many, then they cannot be denied their claim to Christian

discipleship. The essential thing is to believe in the Incarnation; for it is idle to claim a right to the Christian name and at the same time deny the honest testimony of all the sacred writers that the Son of God came in the flesh. Good men and worthy citizens there are among skeptics and rationalists who flatly deny the truth of the doctrine of the Incarnation, but they cannot consistently call themselves Christians; and they certainly have no vocation as Christian teachers. We pass no judgment as to their standing in the sight of God. We are not their judge. We are contending only that the doctrine of the Incarnation is essential to Christian faith and duty—that these cannot function normally with denial of this cardinal truth of the religion of Jesus Christ.

The only sense in which men may call themselves Christians who regard Jesus as a great teacher of religion and ethics, yet deny his Incarnation and proper Divinity, is that in which a man may call himself a Platonist who believes in the idealism of the ancient philosopher, Plato, or a Hegelian who accepts the idealistic pantheism of the German philosopher, Hegel. But such are not disciples of these philosophers in the same sense that Christians are of Jesus Christ. Their attachment is not to a person, but to a philosophy—not to a

Saviour, but to an ideal. The Christian's adherence is first of all to a living Divine Person—a present Helper and Saviour—who has all power with God because He is one with God.

That the doctrine of the Incarnation involves difficulties beyond the comprehension of the mind of man, even the wisest, is not denied, but readily confessed; but that is no reason for rejecting it. Surely it is no more inexplicable than many self-evident verities in the realm of nature. Who, e.g. can comprehend boundless space or endless duration? Who can account scientifically for the origin and development of either the material or the spiritual world? Yet our being unable to comprehend or explain these does not make them any less real or unquestionable. We know of a certainty that space and duration are boundless and endless, and we know equally well that there is a material and a spiritual universe. They are beyond all reasonable question. So because we are not able to understand how a Divine Person could take upon Himself human nature and dwell in his fulness among men it does not follow that it is unreasonable or incredible. If the testimony of his contemporaries and companions to the fact is trustworthy and the life He lived was in perfect accord with the fact, that ought to be sufficient to justify us in receiving the doctrine.

Again, it is not necessary to faith in the Incarnation of the Son of God to believe that while He dwelt in the flesh He saw all things scientifically as well as religiously with unerring understanding. Indeed He Himself disclaimed knowing all things. He did not, for example, know when the end of the old order would take place and the new order dawn; (Matt. 24:36) but what He did know was that it was bound to come and to teach his disciples how to make ready for the great event. He knew infallibly right from wrong, truth from error, spirituality from the spirit of the world. He was unerring in all things appertaining to the development and perfection of character. He lived as well as taught the perfect life of God. His word came with authority and power because his life was an open book. When the humble and inquiring soul heard Him speak it did not doubt that He spoke as the Oracle of God. He left no doubt in the mind of any honest inquirer after the truth. Every hungry and sin-sick soul that appealed to Him for help or relief went away satisfied. Only those who came in quest of some pretext for bringing an accusation against Him went away disappointed.

The importance of the doctrine of the Incarnation cannot be over-stated or over-estimated. It is God's supreme revelation of Himself to man-

kind. Though He spoke and wrought through lawgivers, poets and prophets, the voice was not always clear and distinct, and did not appeal to nor deeply impress the masses of men. Even the writers themselves spoke at times with more or less uncertainty and variableness; and it was not always easy to reconcile their facts one with the other. It is because they were but men, good men indeed and evidently moved by the Spirit of God to write and speak, but not free from the defects of sin and consequent liability to misinterpret at times the heavenly message. But Jesus, being filled with the wisdom and goodness of God, could and did always speak with authority and positiveness. Being complete in all moral perfections, his knowledge of the truth was not circumscribed nor biassed. His eye was clear and single; no beam nor mote ever in it to distort or disturb its vision. "His whole body was full of light." He was so filled with the love of God for mankind that He knew even as He was known by the Father. He had the vision which St. Paul said would be no longer in part after charity or love has done its perfect work. Perfect love not only casts out all fear; it removes all spiritual blindness and darkness. It enables the soul to see eye to eye with God. So Christ was the perfect ethical and religious Teacher be-

cause He was filled with the light and love of the Heavenly Father. In Him was no darkness at all. This is true notwithstanding the fact that He was subject to temptation the same as other men and had to keep up perpetual warfare against the same soul-enemy that tries every good man. But He never failed to triumph over every foe, and therefore never failed to bear infallible witness to the truth. The records of his trials and temptations are not fiction, though we may not be able to reconcile the fact of his unique relation to the Father with the reality of his exposure to actual temptation. The question is often asked, "How could the Son of God be really tempted to disobey any law of God?" The question is indeed a hard one to answer, and it is no wonder that many have stumbled over it. Others have adopted the alternative of contending that the temptations He was apparently subject to were not real, but only formal and for the sake of example. But we know that Jesus never dissembled. He was always most real; never an actor. That He was most sorely tried and tempted in the desert and also in the garden of Gethsemane there can be no reasonable question. Owing to his high character as the Son of God it may have been morally impossible and doubtless was for Him to ever be overcome by temptation. However that may be, we know that He was actually

tempted over and over again, and that the temptations were such as were calculated to appeal strongly to a great and good man. To resist them He had to take the same course as other men when sorely tried, that of self-denial and prayer.

No doctrine of the Incarnation would be tenable that denied the reality of the trials and temptations to which Jesus is said to have been exposed. While He ever spoke with the positiveness which only one possessing perfect knowledge is entitled to speak, and while He lived absolutely above just criticism—never under any circumstances giving way to any weakness of flesh or spirit, He overcame as man, not as God. And this made Him capable, from deepest experience, to sympathize fully with mankind in the struggle after godliness. He could be “touched with the feeling of our infirmities,” because He was “in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin.” (Heb. 4:15).

From this point of view we see how important it was that the Son of God should empty Himself, as St. Paul says, and take the form of a servant and dwell as a man among men. It qualified and enabled Him, through actual experience, to perfectly understand our weakness and needs, and to sympathize with us in all our troubles and temptations. At the same time He was able to show us the Father—

to speak with the authority of both experience and that of a worthy and trusted Son. Well could He say, as no other ever could or in his right mind ever did say, "I am the way, the truth and the life. No one cometh unto the Father but by me." (John. 14:6).

Not only was the Incarnation necessary to voice the mind of God toward mankind, it was also necessary to reveal the heart of God. Until the Son of God came in the flesh and laid down his life in sacrifice for the sin of the world could or did men learn that the chief and most glorious attribute of God is love, an attribute which finds its highest expression in sacrifice. This was a conception of the Divine Being scarcely even dreamed of by the great priests and prophets of religion before Christ. Here even the great Plato, one of the wisest and noblest expounders of philosophy and religion among the ancients, fell short, for he had no thought of carrying his idealism past the point of dealing out strict justice to his fellow-man, and that only so far as to involve no great sacrifice or suffering. None of the great founders of religions before Christ, or even since, ever conceived of God as capable of suffering in behalf of the needy and sinful. Their God was ever impassive—incapable of suffering. The great sacrifice which the Son of God made in dwelling among

men, living in poverty, enduring the agony of base ingratitude, suspicion and false accusation, and finally dying on a Roman cross at the beckon and hands of those He came to save, sets God before us in a light entirely new and unsuspected in the world. “Scarcely for a righteous man will one die, yet for the good man some would even dare to die; but God commendeth his love toward us in that while we were yet sinners Christ died for us”. (Rom. 5:7,8).

It is not the intent of this chapter to discourse at length on the doctrine of the atonement, though that doctrine is involved in what has just been said. This was necessary in our endeavor to show the completeness of the Incarnation. It brought God down to our human nature in the fulness of his character as nearly as that is possible from our point of view, revealing Him in his highest perfection and setting Him before us in the most attractive light conceivable. Whether the Son of God would ever have become incarnate had not sin abounded in the world we can only conjecture. It is not inconceivable; for it may be that it would have been the only way God could reveal Himself to the understanding of man. But this much seems clear: that owing to the need caused by sin we get a view of the capacity of God to suffer not otherwise possible.

CHAPTER IV

THE LOVE OF THE FATHER—THE ATONEMENT

There is no doctrine more insisted upon in the Holy Scriptures than that of the Atonement. Whatever theories—true or false—and they are many, which devout and learned men have thought and worked out, or defended, concerning the atonement, all have contended for its great importance and vital necessity to the redemption of erring mankind. No man who believes at all in Divine revelation can possibly look upon the doctrine of the atonement with indifference or unconcern. He feels too deeply that he owes a debt to God too great for him to meet or discharge by any act or offering of his own. In some way he must get relief and that relief must come from a higher than human source.

The word “Atonement” is not found in the latest and best versions of the New Testament, the word, “Reconciliation” taking its place as being the more accurate and consistent rendering in the light of the spirit of the Gospel. In his epistle to the church in Rome, St. Paul writes, “We also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received the rec-

onciliation.” This rendering is in better accord with the preceding verse, which reads in both the old and the new versions, “While we were yet enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more being reconciled shall we be saved by his life.” In the light of these quotations from St. Paul and of others which might be cited it is obvious that the New Testament meaning of the Greek word, *katallagen*, is reconciliation, and that the word, atonement, when referring to the sacrifice of Christ, must be so understood. Whatever significance it may have had to Old Testament writers, this is what it meant to the writers of the New.

Now this fact seems to have been lost sight of, or much obscured, in the minds of most of the older Christian exponents of the doctrine of the atonement, all carrying the idea that the sufferings and death of Christ were primarily and chiefly to reconcile the Father to us, to appease his wrath, satisfy divine justice, magnify the law and make it honorable; thereby so changing the attitude of God toward man as to make it consistent and safe to forgive him his sins and to treat him as guiltless in the sight of heaven. But the fact is, there is not a single text in the New Testament that can be fairly construed to show that Christ suffered to

reconcile his Father to us, or to prove that it was necessary for Jesus, or any one else, to die to placate God, satisfy his sense of justice, or move the Divine compassion. On the contrary the word everywhere is that it was God's love, never his wrath, that moved Him to give up his Son in sacrifice for our redemption. The whole trend of the Gospel is in this direction; in fact that is the Gospel. In parable and similitude, in word and deed, it seemed to be the chief aim and end of Jesus to set forth this blessed truth. He never qualified it in any way whatever.

It should be distinctly understood at the outset that no theory of the atonement can be approved or tolerated which conveys the idea that there was ever any necessity of changing the mind or heart of God toward mankind in the process of salvation. True, the offering of Jesus on the cross was in an important sense a sacrifice to God, but not for the purpose of appeasing his wrath or of winning his favor. Such an idea is repugnant to all Gospel teaching. It was never God who needed to be reconciled or changed, but man. It should be ever kept in mind that God Himself was the prime mover in the work of reconciliation. "God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not imputing to them their trespasses."

Thus Father and Son were equally concerned in the atoning sacrifice. Jesus, though full of compassion, was not more compassionate than the Father. The Son could do nothing apart from the Father, according to his own testimony. The Father could not require of his beloved Son a sacrifice which He Himself would not willingly make and practically did make. What father does not suffer equally with his son who voluntarily takes his life in his hand to save his country from its enemies? Can we think of the God and Father of Christ as being less deeply concerned in the great sacrifice for the sins of the world than his only begotten Son? Mr. D. L. Moody once said, "I used to think of God as a stern judge on a throne, from whose wrath Jesus Christ had saved me. It seems to me now that I could not have had a falser view or idea of God than that. Since I have become a father I have made this discovery: That it takes more love and sacrifice for the father to give up the son than it does the son to die." That is the way every true father must feel; and can we think of the Father of Christ as being less capable of paternal feeling than an earthly father?

At the same time it must not be thought a light thing for God to forgive and treat as his children those who have wilfully and grievously broken

his Holy laws. It must be borne in mind that the laws of God are as sacred and eternal as his own nature. It is all-important that they be honored and kept inviolate by every creature made in his image. To dishonor them, or to allow others to dishonor them with impunity, is repugnant to the conception of either a righteous or a merciful God. This fact must not be ignored in any discussion of the doctrine of the atonement. Mankind must never forget that as violators of Divine law their forgiveness and restoration to the favor of God involved infinite cost. What God in his Son suffered to this end can never be told. It is past all possible calculation.

For many people, probably the great majority of the race, it is sufficient for them to believe and understand that upon repentance of sin and faith in Jesus Christ God freely forgives them, whether or not they entertain sound views of the doctrine of the atonement. They have never committed any very dreadful sin or crime against God or man —any act of lawlessness far-reaching in its effect, doing irreparable injury or grievous wrong to any individual, family or state. They have lived and moved about quietly in their neighborhoods, harming no one intentionally and always minding their own business. Their sins have been for the most

part sins of omission rather than of commission. It would seem to be enough for them to confess their sins and ask God to forgive them in Christ's name and to help them to lead better lives. They are probably far from being what they might or ought to be, but they cannot be classed among the really bad or wicked.

But there are those, and their number is legion, who do not come under so favorable a head. There are those who are conscious of having committed sins wilfully, under strong temptation, or great provocation, which not only injured themselves, but others, and up to that time, innocent persons, and that to an extent irreparable. They have been guilty of breaking up peaceful and happy homes, or injuring the good name of neighbors and competitors, or of destroying virtue in manhood or womanhood, or of having deceived and robbed creditors and squandering the spoils. Broken banks, in which large sums of money and other securities had been placed for safe-keeping by hard-working and confiding people who were trying to lay up a little store to meet an obligation, or to have something to draw on in old age or other infirmity, tell the story of awful guilt. There are divers ways in which men have done grievous wrong and injury to others which must lie upon

their conscience, when once their moral sense has been awakened, like a cancer on the liver, eating out their very life. Is there any conception of the atonement adequate to give relief to one staggering under the burden of such awful guilt? Can it be possible for such a one to find grounds for believing and feeling that his sins are all forgiven and the slate against him rubbed clean? Can he ever again hold up his head and stand in the presence of God as one no longer guilty or under condemnation?

Many well-meant efforts have been made to evolve a theory of the atonement equal to the task of meeting so serious a condition—a theory so well-grounded and satisfactory as to make the vilest sinner and basest criminal feel, on repentance, as one innocent in the sight of heaven. But who has ever found any of these theories satisfactory or tenable in the light of sound criticism or revelation? Dr. R. G. Cambell, of Brighton, England, after stating the case clearly and forcibly, undertakes to solve the enigma by making God primarily and actually responsible for the origin and existence of evil and sin, thereby binding Him to provide for the cancellation of guilt, or the removal of the entail between man and his responsibility for his sins. But his argument in defense of his position or theory is what logicians would call a *paralogism*,

a fallacy in reasoning of which he seems to be unconscious. It fails to satisfy either reason or conscience. It savors too much of the old sophism, "Let us do evil that good may come." To make God accountable for sin is to make Him ungodly.

Any theory of the atonement that undertakes to make it provide for the elimination of the sense of guilt in the conscience of one who has committed sins involving consequences which can never be avoided or reversed, wronging another or others beyond the possibility of righting, cannot be accepted or tolerated. It is unreasonable and immoral. The sacrifice of Christ was never designed to achieve such an objective—to perform so hopeless a task. That would imply a moral impossibility.

But that is no reason for concluding that the divine sacrifice was to no purpose in behalf of the penitent, however guilty in the sight of heaven. On the contrary it finds a far higher virtue and effectiveness. The divine compassion goes out in all its depth and fullness towards such unfortunate victims of sin and guilt; and while it does not save them from the immediate consequences of their sins, much less from the consciousness of guilt, it can and does give them encouragement and support in bearing their punishment, and at the same time shows them the way and moves them to do works

meet for repentance. It does not leave them in hopeless case, nor to bear their burden all alone. The Divine Redeemer suffers with and in them, making it possible for them to bear their burden, however grievous.

And here is where the sacrificial offering of Christ counts for most. While it serves to deepen man's sense of guilt and unworthiness as he looks upon the Cross and realizes that he has part in that awful tragedy, he beholds in the face of the innocent sufferer such divine compassion that he is moved to respond humbly and heartily to whatever sacrifice and service he may be called upon to render. He is encouraged thereby to not permit his sense of guilt and unworthiness to hinder him from at once enlisting for service, but rather to stir him up to greater diligence in efforts to redeem the time lost while living in mortal sin. Thus the Cross becomes his salvation.

When the persecutor, Saul of Tarsus, heard, as he was on his way to Damascus in mad pursuit of the disciples, the beseeching voice of Jesus saying, "Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?" and learning who it was who spoke to him, though prostrated with an awful sense of shame and guilt, he did not despair, but cried out imploringly, "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" He was so mightily

moved by the compassionate voice of Jesus that he was ready at once to give heed to his word and align himself with the hitherto despised disciples. He wanted to do something without delay to atone for the irreparable wrong he had done in pursuing the disciples with murder in his heart. Though assured of the divine forgiveness, he was not relieved of the consciousness of guilt. Nor did he ask or even covet such relief. He was too great a soul for that. We know that he never could forgive himself for his work as a persecutor; and why should he expect to be immune from all penalty? Yet he was made to feel at once that he had such a friend in Jesus as to move him to devote himself with all his redeemed powers to the cause of Him whom he had so madly persecuted.

Saul well knew that he could never bring back the soul of St. Stephen—that he never could undo the grievous wrong he had done him and the others whose persecution he instigated and encouraged. The sense of guilt for those crimes must ever weigh upon his quickened conscience. He was willing enough to suffer for that. He would not have been a real man had he felt otherwise. But because of the compassion of Christ as manifested in his cross and passion, he was moved and enabled to do and to endure more for the spread of his kingdom than

any and probably all of the other apostles. Nothing was too big or too hard for him to undertake—no risk of life too great for him to make in the Master's service. He held not his life as of any account, as dear unto himself, if only he might accomplish his course, and the ministry he received from the Lord Jesus, to testify the gospel of the grace of God.

What now must be our conclusion as to the efficacy of the sacrifice of the death of Christ in its bearing on our salvation? In what sense may it be looked upon as an atonement for our sins? How, in other words, does it avail for the guilty? Not, as already seen, by appeasing the anger of God toward the guilty; for it was God in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself. Nor could it have been to suffer as a substitute the penalty of broken law, that the guilty might go scot free from all the consequences of his sins. Guilt is altogether too personal for that. It can never be transferred to another. All such theories of the atonement—all such attempted solutions of the perplexing problem—fail to satisfy either reason or conscience. They certainly find no justification in any fair interpretation of the Gospel. They must all be peremptorily ruled out.

Is there then no way out of the dilemma? To the mind of the writer the only theory that can be

defended, though he does not claim that it clears up every difficulty, is that which is implied in the word “reconciliation”, obviously the better rendering of the Greek word “katallagen”, as used by St. Paul in Rom. 5:11. It reconciles man to God, not God to man. It removes the enmity in the human heart towards God, not any emnity in the Divine heart; for the sacrifice of Christ was the revelation of the Divine clemency which always obtained, and never had to be purchased by any one, Divine or human. The cross reconciles the sinner to God by convicting him of sin, moving him to repentance and enabling him to take up his own cross in the name of Christ to work out his own salvation. And this is his atonement—his at-one-ment, his reconciliation, his redemption. And God in his mercy accepts his repentance and service, however imperfect it may be, and welcomes him back into his loyal family.

The only sense in which it may be said that Christ in his death bears the penalty of man's sin is in the person of the penitent soul. The new man in whom Christ dwells—the Christed man, as Horace Bushnell would call him—suffers for the man he was formerly, that is, before his conversion. As Kant puts it, the good man takes upon himself the sins of the wicked, and stands in his

place before the judge. Thus it is the Christ within him, not apart from him, who suffers for him. In a similar sense St. Paul speaks when he says, "Nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ that liveth within me."

Whatever relation to the law or government of God the sacrifice of Christ may sustain must be reckoned as beyond our ken. That it does sustain some important relation thereunto—that it is esteemed in heaven as something more than a moral dynamic to subdue and bring to repentance and good works the enemies of God—is by no means denied. Without doubt many of the theories of the atonement worked out by sincere and learned men of old contained some grains of truth. But that the chief objective of the sacrifice of the Son of God was to vindicate the righteousness of God rather than to conquer enmity in the human heart toward God, is, in the light of the Gospel, without convincing proof. Is not the whole Gospel summed up in the words of Jesus familiar to us all: "God so loved the world that He gave his only begotten Son that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have eternal life. For God sent not his Son into the world to judge the world, but that the world through Him might be saved?" No theory of the atonement that loses sight of this

text, or that attempts to qualify it in support of such theory, can be tenable or worthy of consideration. It is the whole Gospel of the reconciliation that is therein contained, and that reconciliation is not to effect a change in the heart of God towards man, but a change in the rebellious heart of man towards God. The Son of God did not come into the world to move the compassion of the Father—to make Him propitious, but to turn the heart of humanity Godward and heavenward. The estrangement was not in the heart of God, but in the heart of man. If any one doubt this sentiment let him read the Parable of the Prodigal Son, our Lord's own picture of the attitude of his Father toward his wayward children. There is no suggestion or hint in this parable of an intermediary or friend coming in between the father and the son to suffer in the prodigal's stead, or to entreat the father's compassion. Being a true father no such conditions were required. It was enough for the son to return in penitence and manifest a readiness to serve his father again in any capacity. The father was more than willing to welcome him home and treat him as a son. Such a Father is God.

In this article on the Atonement no one could be more sensible of its defects and limitations than the writer himself. Certainly it fails to answer

many questions which any student of the Old and New Testaments might readily and rightfully ask. That there is vastly more in the great sacrifice which the Son of God made for the sins of the world than is herein brought out has already been and is freely acknowledged. There was no intention to treat the subject exhaustively, even if that were possible. It should always be borne in mind that the atonement, or reconciliation secured to us through Christ, was not accomplished by His death upon the cross alone but by all that He was and is and by all that He did and still does to bring man into fellowship with God. The purpose of the article is accomplished if the affirmation has been made good that the doctrine generally called the atonement, but more accurately termed "reconciliation", is one of the Great Essentials of the Christian faith and life.

CHAPTER V

THE GREAT POWER OF THE FATHER— THE RESURRECTION

The Resurrection of the dead has ever been reckoned by the Catholic Church as a cardinal doctrine of our religion, apart from which Christianity has no distinctive meaning or message. Jesus taught it clearly and insistently, confirming its truth by becoming the first fruit thereof. The disciples were so thoroughly convinced of the fact that He rose from the dead that they diligently held it up in their ministry as of greatest possible moment because it was to them the sure token of their own resurrection. The one involved and was the sure token of the other. “If the dead rise not,” St. Paul argued, “then Christ was not raised, and if Christ be not raised all gospel preaching is vain, faith is vain and all men are left in hopeless sin.”

If the credibility of the resurrection of Jesus Christ depended chiefly on the documentary evidences available, there is none more complete or adequate for any fact or event in all ancient history. The number and character of the witnesses speak in strongest terms. Men and women of purest minds and motives, who at first were so doubtful that they did not even look for his reappearance in

their midst, but visited the tomb as we visit the graves of our loved ones today, are witnesses whose testimony cannot reasonably be ignored. When they found the tomb empty they were overwhelmed with disappointment and sorrow. Instead of the thought instantly occurring to them that He had fulfilled his promise of rising from the dead, they suspected that there had been a grave robbery—that his enemies had stolen his body away. How otherwise, they reasoned, could the tomb be empty? They well remembered that the door of the tomb had been blocked with a great stone and sealed with the imperial seal of Rome, and also that it was guarded by details of Roman soldiers. How could it be opened save by the soldiers themselves, or with their consent?

But happily the disciples were not left long in doubt and anxiety. Proof that there had been no grave robbery by an enemy was too near at hand; for though the body of Jesus had disappeared from the tomb, He Himself had not gone far away. In fact He was there all the time and was ready to manifest Himself to the disciples as soon as their eyes were open to see Him. First He appeared to Mary of Magdala, whose mind He had relieved of a dreadful obsession, and whose love for her great Deliverer was deepest of all. Then He appeared to

the other devoted women who came hurriedly after Mary to assist her in completing the embalming left unfinished on Good Friday night. Then He showed Himself to Peter and John who were first among His chosen to visit the tomb on the morning of the third day. Later the same day He appeared to two other disciples on their way to Emmaus, walking and talking with them and sitting down with them at meat. At one time, St. Paul tells us, He appeared to more than five hundred of his disciples simultaneously; so he had been credibly informed; and he does not doubt the word because he himself had been granted a vision of the risen Lord long after his reported ascension, and therefore could testify from personal experience that He was alive indeed. So why should we doubt the witness of those who declared they saw Him before His ascension?

Whether or not the disciples were able to behold the risen Lord by their natural sense of sight we are not explicitly informed, but are left to draw our own conclusion. The important thing is the assurance that they actually saw Him. It is not necessary to faith in his resurrection to believe that the disciples saw Him by natural vision, for we know there is a deeper power of vision than that of the natural eye. It is not improbable therefore

that it was by this deeper power of sight the disciples saw their Lord after He rose from the dead. In fact it seems almost necessary that they should have had such power of vision to enable them to see Him at all in his risen form. We do not indeed know the nature of the change that had taken place in his body when it was raised up, but we know that it must have been very great to enable Him to appear and disappear so quietly and suddenly, oblivious to solid walls and all barriers of space and time. In all probability something had to be done and was done to open the disciples eyes to enable them to see and know Him. We know that even Mary Magdalene, spiritually minded as she was, could not see Him at his first Manifestation. Her vision was not clear and deep enough as yet. The disciples of Emmaus must behold Him break bread, as it were a new celebration of the Holy Supper, before they were able to recognize Him. Time and again He would be in the same room with them for some moments before they realized that He was present. It is significant also that though He was seen by so many men and women during the forty days between his resurrection and ascension, He was seen by his friends and followers only. Why should He withhold Himself from the vision of his enemies if it had been pos-

sible for Him to manifest Himself to them? Did He not come into the world to save them as well as His disciples, and would not their seeing Him after His resurrection have led to the conversion of at least some of them? The natural inference is that they could not see Him because they lacked the spiritual vision necessary. Does not this indicate that it was with eyes touched with the light of heaven that enabled the faithful to behold their risen Lord?

Another reason for thinking that Jesus was not visible to the naked eye after his resurrection is the marvelous manner in which He was raised. It was obviously not by anything like a mechanical process or dynamic. It was not a physical miracle in the ordinary sense of the word. It belongs to a different and higher order of operation. According to both the apostles, Peter and Paul, the power with which Jesus was raised up was the *glory of the Father*. Peter told the astonished people who witnessed the healing of the lame man at the gate Beautiful of the temple, that God *glorified* his servant Jesus whom they crucified, thus raising Him from the dead. Paul gives utterance to the same sentiment in his epistle to the Romans, telling them plainly that Christ was raised by the glory of the Father. (Rom. 6:4.) Does not this witness remove

the resurrection of the Lord from the category of the material and earthly and raise it to the realm of the spiritual and heavenly? A flood of heavenly light and love was poured out upon Him, filling the tomb with a glory unearthly, whose warmth and radiance penetrated and permeated His whole nature and personality so that it was impossible for the grave to hold Him longer. The glory of the Father found its most natural function in raising up his beloved Son. It was ground most fertile and ready for such fruitage. Glory responded to glory, truth to truth, purity to purity, love to love. The glory of the Father pouring like a flood of light upon Him, as the sun of the solar system upon the natural world in spring-time, causing vegetation to sprout and come forth to life again, so how natural and inevitable that He should awake and rise from the dead to die no more! And as it was a spiritual operation that caused Him to rise, so He must have been in a form after his resurrection too unearthly for human eyes to look upon Him untouched by heavenly light and power.

But however the disciples were enabled to see their Lord after his resurrection, whether by spiritually aided or by unaided vision, it is certain they were not mistaken or deceived. Had they been they could never have kept up courage and

interest so long under such trying circumstances, much less accomplished so much for the spread of a doctrine based on imagination or fiction. As Lord Salisbury once said, "There is no event in history better attested than the fact that Jesus Christ rose from the dead, for without this fact the existence of Christianity is itself absolutely inexplicable." Not only did the disciples go about everywhere preaching the word in the face of the most violent opposition, gathering congregations for worship and service, but in His name they healed the sick, cured the lame and halt, unstopped deaf ears, and even brought the dead back to life. They accomplished the greater works which He promised them they should be given power to do in His name. Much as they valued the memory of His companionship and personal ministry before His departure from them, and much as they stressed the loving sacrifice which He had made for their sins by His death on the cross, it was the risen and living Christ which they ever held up as the great power of God unto salvation. They were fully persuaded that He was not only alive, but that He was very near at hand; yea, nearer than hands and feet. It was this consciousness of Christ within them that made them strong and even bold in the face of all manner of opposition to preach the Gos-

pel of the Kingdom. They were as certain that He was alive and present with them as they were that He lived and walked with them before his crucifixion.

But why is belief in the fact that Jesus Christ was raised from the dead essential to the Christian life and hope? Could we not be his faithful followers just the same had He not been raised up—had He remained in the lap of earth like other great and good men? Impossible. It must be borne in mind that Jesus was a humble man, not a person of worldly distinction or royalty—that He had no reputation among the wise and great of earth; that He was put to death as a capital criminal, not as a prophet; that He had no name in the world like the founders of other great religions to help in keeping alive his memory. Everything therefore depended on his rising again from the dead and making Himself known to His disciples to give them assurance at the beginning of His living presence and power. Nothing less could have sustained them in their ministry in the face of such violent opposition as they encountered. Had He not actually risen again it is doubtful if He would have had any following after His death, and it is certain He would have none today. He was unknown, or at least unrecognized, by the profane historians

of His day. Even Josephus, who must have at least heard of Him ignored Him. If He was known to any Jewish historian or pagan he was very careful to make no mention of His name lest he might help rather than hinder the spread of His Kingdom. There were few, if any, unbiassed historians in those times.

It was the disciples' conviction that He was alive and among them which eventually forced His name into the pages of history and gave vitality to a movement that has proved farther reaching and wielded a wider influence for good than any religion or other powerful movement the world has ever known. Nothing less than the consciousness and assurance of a present living Saviour could ever have given such impetus to a thoroughly spiritual religion like the Christian.

Now the doctrine of the resurrection of Jesus Christ is important not only because it assures us of a living Saviour, but also because it is the pledge and token that all those who die to sin as He died to the world of sense shall rise with Him to a new and endless life. As St. Paul says, "If we died with Him, we believe that we shall also live with Him; knowing that Christ being raised from the dead dieth no more." That is, has passed beyond the dominion and power of death, whether in this

world or in the world to come. In other words, our union with Him in His death and resurrection is the pledge of immortality and eternal life.

Observe that our resurrection with Christ is two-sided, according to Paul's analogy. It is both a resurrection from the power of death in this life and in the life of the world to come. We should never think of the resurrection of the dead apart from the resurrection which is accomplished when the new life in Christ begins in us. It is this first rising from the dead that should be our great concern, for unless we have experienced this resurrection the other can be nothing to us because we have no part in it. Whatever may be the nature of the body in which the faithful appear after mortality, we know that it is not the same body that was laid away in the grave. As St. Paul says, "It is not that body that shall be, but a bare grain . . . but God giveth it a body even as it pleased Him, and to each seed a body of its own. (I Cor. 15:37-8.) In other words, As the resurrection of Christ was a spiritual operation, so must be the resurrection of those who die in Him. It begins when one first puts on Christ, that is, becomes united to Him by faith. The rising again from mortal death is the completion of the spiritual process begun at conversion.

There is and can be no resurrection to life for

those who deny Christ by giving themselves up to self-seeking and general lawlessness. It was a later and less spiritual theology, not the theology of the New Testament, that discriminates radically between the resurrection before and after death. Jesus said, "I am the resurrection and the life; he that believeth in me, though he die, yet shall he live; and whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die." Again, He said, "The hour cometh and now is when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God, and they that hear shall live."

Just what St. Paul meant by "the body that shall be" being spiritual we do not know; it may not have been clear in his own mind. But this much he did know, and that is that it was not ordinary flesh and blood, and that it was a body that had no existence apart from its living entity, the soul. That this view of the resurrection does not agree with the traditional dogma that the dead in Christ must wait in some intermediate state till the end of the world, or of this dispensation, for their reunion with their glorified bodies then to be raised up from their graves is freely admitted. But why should that disturb our faith in the resurrection? Nowhere in the New Testament can a statement be found fairly justifying the traditional view. It is an inference at best, and one which

utterly ignores Paul's doctrine of a spiritual body, a body very different from the body that was buried, but a germ of life springing up like new wheat from decaying seed. According to Paul's similitude, As the grain of wheat sown in the ground does not itself come up, but in dying releases the germ of life which does spring up, and that into new and larger life and fruitage, so the death of the body of man releases the soul in order that it may be free to take on new and permanent form, like unto the old, indeed, but so different in kind as to be imperishable in its very nature. "To each seed a body of its own," but not the same body. It is a body adapted to its new and nobler state.

Whether this view of the character and manner of the resurrection of Christ and of the dead in Him is correct or not the writer is far from speaking with authority. It is offered for consideration because it seems to him to be fairly in harmony with both the letter and spirit of the Gospel and at the same time most reasonable and credible. It removes it from the category of the material and mechanical and raises it to a plane in keeping with so exalted a condition and destiny. The point, however, may not be of first importance, though it seems to the writer to make the doctrine of the resurrection easier to receive. It is the *fact* of the resurrection,

not the character and manner thereof, that most deeply concerns us. As to how the dead are raised up and with what manner of body they come forth, we may differ widely and still remain Christian. But if we deny the fact and reality of the resurrection of Christ and of the dead in Him, and hold with the Saducees of old that there is no resurrection, neither angel nor spirit, then we certainly can lay no just claim to the Christian name and are without a well-grounded hope in God or the life of the world to come.

CHAPTER VI

EXALTED TO THE RIGHT HAND OF THE FATHER— THE ASCENSION

If it is essential to the Christian life and hope that one believe in the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, the same must be said of the report of His ascension and consequent departure from the visible world. The Catholic Church has always commemorated the fortieth day after Easter as one of the five great festivals of the Christian year. In so doing equal emphasis is put on the great occurrence with Christmas, Epiphany, Easter and Whitsunday. This plainly implies that the Church holds the ascension of Christ as fundamental in its creed and life. Do the facts justify the Church in taking this stand? It is the aim of this article to show that the stand is well taken—that the ascension was the natural and necessary sequel to the resurrection of the Lord, without which even His resurrection could not have achieved its exalted purpose.

According to the author of the *Acts of the Apostles* the scene of the Ascension was witnessed by one hundred and twenty men and women who had been among his faithful followers prior to His crucifixion. So St. Luke had been credibly in-

formed, and he had substantial evidence of the trustworthiness of the word. St. Paul was also a firm believer in the testimony of the witnesses, for he refers to the fact of the Lord's Ascension repeatedly in his epistles, finding great satisfaction and significance in it, as we shall see later in this article. While St. John does not report the scene of the Ascension in any of his writings, he quotes the words of Jesus forecasting the fact. "No man hath ascended into heaven but He that descended out of heaven, even He that is in heaven." Again, "What and if ye shall behold the Son of man ascending up where he was before?" And again, to Mary Magdalene on the morning of His resurrection, "Touch me not, for I am not yet ascended to my Father, but go unto my brethren and say to them, I ascend unto my Father and to your Father, and to my God and your God." The fact that neither St. Matthew nor St. Mark records the scene of the Ascension, (the reference at the end of the latter's gospel being by a later hand,) is no evidence that they did not know about it. It is plainly implied in the closing words of Matthew's gospel where he records the great commission, "Go ye into all the world and make disciples of all the nations . . . Lo I am with you always, even to the end of the age." Whether or not St. Mark intended

to or actually did record the fact of the Ascension we do not know, for his gospel was abruptly broken off in the oldest mss. at the end of the eighth verse. It matters not; for we know that many important facts and incidents in our Lord's life and ministry were not witnessed by all who wrote about Him; but that does not impeach the testimony of the witnesses, whether one or many.

Now the fact of the Ascension of our Lord being so thoroughly established by so many faithful and true witnesses, witnesses too, who laid so much stress upon it, it follows that it must have been an event of great significance. But it must not be concluded that because He ascended into the heavens in the sight of the disciples He then and there actually departed from them to be no longer with them in any form or manner. That would have been to prove untrue to His own word, "Lo, I am with you always." A cloud indeed received Him out of their sight; but it was only a cloud, and it did not prevent his speedy return to them to make good his parting promise. In fact his ascension was essential to his more perfect and permanent presence among them. As St. Paul says, "He that descended is the same also that ascended far above all heavens that He might fill all things." i. e., that He might with the Father become a per-

vasive presence, able to appear in spirit and power to each and all his followers at all times and in all places unimpeded by any barriers.

But does not the word say that when He ascended into or through the heavens He sat down at the right hand of God? True, but what and where is the right hand of God? Of course it is a figure of speech, but it is very significant. With most men the right hand is the stronger; it is the hand with which they do the most and best work. It is in this light that we must think of the right hand of God, that it represents the great power and love of God. As the exercise of that power, or those attributes is omnipresent as well as almighty, so to sit on the right hand of God is not to sit on some exalted throne high up in the heavens, far away from the inhabitants of this planet, but to be wherever the right hand of God holds forth. In other words, the session of our Lord at the right hand of God is a condition and vantage-ground far-reaching and unlimited by time or space. The great truth is, our Lord's ascension was really his transcendence. As St. Paul says, "He that descended is the same also that ascended far above all the heavens, that He might fill all things."

It was the consciousness of the transcendent presence or imminence of Christ that comforted

and supported the disciples in their ministry when the whole world was against them. Though they looked for a speedy return of their Lord in the form and manner in which they saw Him depart, to take up his reign among them as their Messiah, they never doubted that He was with them in spirit and continually. They were evidently mistaken about the time and manner of his return, but not of the reality of his presence among them. Their expectation of a more manifest personal presence on his part did not lead them to act as though He was absent. To illustrate: When Peter and John were asked by a life-long cripple at the gate “Beautiful” of the temple for alms, Peter replied, “Silver and gold have I none, but such as I have give I thee.” What then did he have, if not money? It was something infinitely better than money or any other material asset. It was Jesus Christ that the apostle possessed; for in that name he commanded the cripple to rise up and walk. Where was Jesus but within Peter to enable him to speak with such assurance and helpfulness? When St. Stephen was being stoned to death and his lights were going out he had an unearthly vision, the glory of God, and Jesus standing on the right hand of God, not afar off, but evidently very near at hand. Saul of Tarsus, in spite of his bitter opposi-

tion to the Church, had some such vision of the ascended Christ, and he ever afterwards lived and labored in the joy of that presence. In writing to the Galatians he says, "I am crucified with Christ, yet I live, and yet no longer I, but Christ liveth in me." Though Paul, like the other apostles and evangelists, looked for a personal visible return of Christ in his day, he did not doubt that He was in and with him all the time, enabling him to speak in His name the words of life. His mystical mind was able to grasp and to rest in the essential truth of the divine presence and power which was ever at his command, while at the same time indulging the hope of a more manifest revelation of Messiah's kingdom in his lifetime. The truth is, Paul ever lived in the power of his Lord's ascension and trans-cension.

Another reason why the ascension of Christ is so significant is that it was the exaltation of human nature. In the ascension our humanity is taken up into the life of God. Far from its being the renunciation of human nature which He took upon Himself when He was born into this world, it was His enthronement. It was, as it were, our human nature entering upon its true heritage. It signified the spiritual and eternal in man asserting its superiority and power over the material and

temporal. Jesus did not depart to dwell alone with God, but to unite mankind unto God. His exaltation is our exaltation. His enthronement our enthronement, His coronation our coronation.

This sublime truth is portrayed most beautifully and forcibly in the last verse of that best of all the ascension hymns, by C. Wordsworth:

“Thou hast raised our human nature
On the throne to Gods right hand;
There we sit in heavenly places,
There with Thee in glory stand.
Jesus reigns adored of angels;
Man with God is on the throne;
Mighty God in thine ascension,
We by faith behold our own.”

No words could better express the purpose and achievement of the ascension than that exalted sentiment. It removes it far away from the material and sensuous category and makes it preeminently spiritual. In other words, it makes the departure of our risen Lord in His ascension the pledge of a high and more perfect union with our humanity. The Head of humanity becomes enthroned—seated on the right hand of power to perfect the union between God and man. In Him, our ascended Lord, we sit together in heavenly places. We are exalted unto the same place whither He Himself

has gone, and our life is hid with Him in God. Henceforth to those who abide in Christ heaven and earth are not far apart, but merge into one another. The world of sense now obscures the vision, but the great reality obtains. Something like this St. Paul must have had in mind when he wrote to the churches, "Set your mind on things above where Christ is, seated on the right hand of God."

Another way of setting forth the glorious truth of the exaltation of humanity in our Lord's ascension is in that it declares the great possibility and opportunity of our humanity. It is that of becoming God-like—of experiencing in our lives the reality of the divine image in which we were created—of attaining unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ. Humanity has a place by right of creation as well as of redemption in the nature of God. It is not an alien by creation in the Divine Family. It is not inherently a stranger to God. Sin and sin only is responsible for the present estrangement obtaining between God and man. The pure in heart always enjoy the vision of God. Jesus' return to the bosom of His Father with His added humanity shows us what it is our privilege to obtain. Where He is there we may be also and continually dwell. We do not have to die, save to

sin, in order to enter the heavenly mansions where Jesus went to prepare a place for His disciples. He is ever coming to His own and making His abode with them, receiving them unto Himself. Where Jesus is there are the heavenly mansions, and they are never far off from His faithful servants.

Thus there is set before us in our Lord's ascension the glorious possibility and opportunity of our human nature. It is that of being joined to Him in eternal union with the Father—of having our humanity taken up into the life of God. It is to become in Christ transfigured—transformed into the divine likeness.

CHAPTER VII

THE PROMISE OF THE FATHER—THE HOLY SPIRIT

In the chapter on the Ascension one important purpose of the marvelous transition in the life of our Lord after his resurrection was omitted; not, however, because it was forgotten, but because it comes under another head. It will be remembered that before His crucifixion Jesus gave to His disciples as His chief reason for departing from them that they might be prepared to receive the Father's promise of the gift of the Holy Spirit, the Comforter. "It is expedient for you that I go away; for if I go not away the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I go, I will send Him unto you." What does He mean? Why could they not receive this precious gift while He remained in bodily form with them? The answer is, for the reason that they were in no state of mind to experience in their hearts his own indwelling so long as they were able to look upon his outward person and form. For what or who is the Holy Spirit in reality but the Spirit of the Father and the Son? Whether we think of the Holy Spirit as the third person of the Holy Trinity or not, it is certain that He is one

with Christ in His essential nature. Nor may we conceive of Him as having any office or work independently of Christ. Their aims and ends are so closely associated that there is no marked line of distinction—no work in which both are not equally and vitally interested and employed. On the contrary it is the distinctive office and work of the Spirit to show and declare Christ unto the disciples. “When He the Spirit of truth is come He shall guide you into all truth; for He shall not speak of Himself; but whatsoever things He shall hear, these shall He speak; for He shall take of mine and shall declare it unto you.” Earlier in the same gospel Jesus declares that the Holy Spirit will be sent by the Father in His name; and again He speaks of Him as sending the Spirit from the Father, so closely are the three associated one with the other in all things. Does not this clearly show that the indwelling of the Spirit with the individual disciple and in the Church is not something distinct or different from the indwelling of Christ, but practically one and the same? The Holy Spirit was and ever is the Spirit of the Father and the Son, having no separate existence from them. As our Lord was about to take his final departure He called his chosen before Him and breathing on them, said, “Receive ye the Holy Ghost; whose-

soever sins ye forgive, they are forgiven unto them; whose soever sins ye retain, they are retained." Clearly it was the Spirit within Himself, not an objective Spirit, so to speak, that He then and there sacredly pledged them. It was probably at this time that He gave these disciples their great commission in which He assured them that He would be continually with them even to the end of the age. That was the way He intended to keep his promise, i. e., by imparting to them the Holy Spirit of his Father ever one with Himself.

The Holy Spirit has always been in the world working both in nature and in the human heart and life. Wherever good meaning men and women have devoted their time and energies to bettering human conditions, whether among Jews or gentiles, the Spirit of the Father and the Son inspired them. They were not alone in the world. Who can doubt that such great souls and ethical teachers and leaders as Confucius, Sakyamuni, Socrates, Plato, Aristotil, Epictetus, Marcus Aurelius and Seneca in the pagan world, and Moses, Samuel, David, Elijah and even Mohammed among monotheists were powerfully moved by the Holy Spirit in their day and generations? True they may not all have understood that a higher spirit—the Spirit of the living God, was moving them in their efforts to

uplift and save their fellow mortals, much less have known Him by name; but the fact that they devoted themselves so ardently to the Spirit's work shows that they were inspired by the Spirit of the one living and true God.

It is the testimony of the Pentetuchal writers that it was the Spirit of God moving upon the face of the chaotic waters of the earth that caused the division of land and water, thereby making it habitable to man and beast. The same spirit breathed into the nostrils of primitive man made him a living soul patterned after the Divine image and likeness. It was the Spirit of God symbolized by the Shekina, that led the children of Israel out of Egyptian bondage through the Red Sea into the wilderness of Arabia and finally out of it across the river Jordan into the promised land of Canaan. The same Spirit inspired law-giver, poet and prophet to speak and write for the instruction and admonition of their own people and for all coming generations. "No phrophecy" says an inspired writer of a later day, "came by the will of man, but men of old spoke as they were moved by the Holy Ghost." (2 Pet. 1:21.) It was the same Spirit overshadowing a Nazarene virgin that enabled her to give birth to the Son of God. The same spirit came to the baptism of Jesus at the Jordan, appear-

ing in the form of a dove, and descending upon Him as He went forth from the waters, declaring Him to be the beloved Son of God.

Thus we see that the Holy Spirit was always in the world, from the very beginning mightily moving upon the hearts of men here and there to speak for God and to move them to works of goodness and righteousness. At the same time He was striving perseveringly and patiently with the disobedient and wayward to bring them to repentance, visiting upon them divers punishments for their iniquities, but ever showing readiness to forgive them when penitent and to receive them into the Family of God.

Not, however, till after our Lord's resurrection and ascension was it possible for the Spirit to come in the fullness of his power and efficiency and with wide-reaching and telling results. It was not till then that the hearts of the entire band of the disciples were in such a state of preparation that they could as one man respond to the proffered gift and improve and enjoy it in adequate measure.

The first great outpouring of the Holy Spirit was most timely, viewed at least from the standing-point of the Jew. It transpired on one of the great festal days of the Jewish year. It was the day of Pentecost, the day that had been set apart under

Moses to commemorate the giving of the law from Mt. Sinai—a day of general obligation, and also of rejoicing for the first fruits of the harvest. How very fitting it was that the great outpouring of the Spirit and the consequent ingathering of converts in great numbers for the young Church should transpire on the anniversary of the festal day commemorating the giving of the moral law and the gathering of the first sheaves of the harvest of golden grain! How significant that as the giving of the law from Mt. Sinai converted the Israelites into a Nation, binding the tribes together by common bonds, the event should be celebrated by the gift of God, the promise of the Father, that should resolve the disciples of Christ into a living Church that should stand for all time, overcoming its enemies within and without!

The nucleus of the Church had indeed been gathered and formed prior to that day, as the material of the nation of Israel had been nurtured and held within bounds under Moses before the law was given from Mount Sinai. But the breath of spiritual life had not so completely filled it as to make it a living soul. It knew as yet little of the spirit of the Founder. It had yet to be awakened to an adequate sense of its great mission and opportunity for service in the world. It was practi-

cally without vitality till that eventful day. It had the outward visible form, but lacked the indwelling Christ. Hence the day of Pentecost which followed closely upon the ascension of our Lord has always and most fittingly been commemorated as the birthday of the Church. Without the great gift which was bestowed in such a wonderful way and measure that day on the little band of waiting disciples, which had gathered from day to day after the ascension in memory of Jesus, they could not have held out very long. They could hardly have survived their generation. They would soon have dispersed and scattered, leaving scarcely a landmark of the short sad history of the movement. It would soon have become but a fading memory. It would have been without the necessary or vital spark to keep it alive.

But the Holy Spirit not only gave life and character to the Church when it was first established, it has sustained its life ever since, and that in spite of a different spirit early finding its way into it. As it breathed into the Church the breath of life on that first great festal day, making it a living soul, so by its continual presence and energy it has kept it alive and at work from generation to generation. Sometimes its enemies of one kind or another seemed to have brought it very near the verge of

destruction; but each and every time some great soul, filled with the Holy Spirit, has risen up to rescue it and give it new and larger life. A St. Francis, a Savanarola, a Luther, or some other lesser light has had his eyes open in time to save the Church from the hand of the destroyer.

Thus we perceive the great importance and necessity of the gift of the Holy Spirit to the life and perpetuity of the Church. We cannot possibly over estimate or overstate that importance. The practical indifference of so many in the Church today to the office and work of the Holy Spirit is responsible for the comparatively slow progress it is making toward making the world its conquest. If even a large proportion of the membership of the Church would open their hearts to let the Spirit in there would be no lack of ministers, evangelists, teachers, or any other class of Christian workers. The harvest would be fully supplied with laborers. There would be no dearth of ministers —no crying need for more candidates for holy orders. The supply would be equal to the demand.

All that makes the Lord of life dear to the heart is the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. Apart from the Spirit there is no love for Christ or his cause. From first to last He is the creative and ever active agency in accomplishing salvation. It

is his office to convict the guilty and to turn the hearts of the disobedient to the wisdom of the just.

The whole process of regeneration depends on the operation of the Holy Spirit. "Except a man be born of water and the Spirit he cannot enter into the Kingdom of Heaven." He must be born from above. It is the Spirit that gives efficacy to both the written and the spoken word, making it as it were a two-edged sword for both defense and conquest, striking at sin in the heart and bringing the disobedient and lawless to repentance and faith. God, Christ, Heaven, eternity become real only to souls open to the gift of the Holy Spirit. He is the inspirer of all unselfish and noble thoughts, all worthy motives, all holy aspirations, all high aims and ends. The same Spirit that in creative morn brooded over the unsettled waters of primitive earth and brought order out of chaos, is present today to work in us, if we will let Him, such a change in our chaotic aims and ends as will make our lives fruitful in all good works. It is the Spirit who sheds abroad the love of God in our hearts, enabling us to keep the first and great commandment and the other like unto it. It is the Spirit that bears witness with our spirits that we are the children of God. It is the Spirit that helps our infirmities, giving us the power of resistance in

the face of temptation. It is the finger of God working within us to enable us to drive out the evil spirits that disturb our thoughts and motives. There is no want or need in man, no condition of mind or heart, that God cannot meet and satisfy with the plenitude of his power and grace in the gift of the Holy Spirit. That blessed Spirit is the unfailing fountain of life, of truth, purity and power, of spiritual energy and beatitude. It is what makes the truly good and pure minded man radically different from the selfish and sensual man. These two types of mankind are actuated by motives as wide apart as the poles; there is little in common between them; and it is all because one is led by the Holy Spirit and the other by the spirit of the world, or that spirit which St. Paul calls "the mind of the flesh".

Do we exaggerate the importance of the office and work of the Holy Spirit in our religion? Then Jesus did also. He seemed even to exalt the person and position of the Spirit above his own. He told the Pharisees who accused Him of casting out demons in the name of Beelzebub, "You are committing the eternal sin. You may speak a word against the Son of Man and be forgiven, but if you blaspheme against the Holy Spirit it shall not be forgiven you." (Luk. 12:10, Mrk. 3:29.)

St. Paul solemnly warns his converts to the Christian faith against grieving the Holy Spirit of God, because by Him they were sealed unto the day of redemption. (Eph. 4:30.) The truth is, Christianity is preeminently a spiritual religion, and for that reason it cannot live or grow apart from the continuous presence and activity of the Holy Spirit. Without the Spirit it may have a name to live, but in reality it is dead. It is the Spirit that giveth life.

CHAPTER VIII

THE INCARNATION EXTENDED—THE CHURCH

In the preceding chapter the important fact was dwelt upon at some length that on the recurrence of the first day of Pentecost after Our Lord's ascension the Holy Spirit was poured out in such measure on the assembled disciples that they were filled with new and abundant spiritual life; and attention was also called to the fact that as one result of that outpouring of the Spirit a new Ecclesia, or Church, took on organic form and began to function as a mighty spiritual power in the world. Thousands were then and there converted to the new faith and were admitted through Holy Baptism into the fellowship of the apostles and brethren. And it is added that they continued in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, in breaking of bread and in the prayers. It meant nothing less than the extention of the Incarnation that had apparently been given up at the cross.

It is evident that the disciples understood this to be the fulfillment of their Lord's promise to build his Church on the apostles as foundation stones, Himself being the head corner stone. From this we are bound to conclude that belief in organ-

ized Christianity, or the Church, is a fundamental article of the Christian faith, and that steadfast adherence to the same is the duty of all. To claim to be a follower of Jesus Christ and to refuse fellowship with his disciples is practically to deny Him.

There are those who say they believe in Christ—in His teachings and example—but they do not believe in the Church. In other words, they believe in Christianity, but not in “Churchanity”, as they characterize it. Now those who talk in this way and make that their pretext for withholding fellowship from the Church show plainly that they neither understand Christianity nor Christ. They ignore the Lord’s plain teaching, and they are ignorant of the Spirit who gave the Church its life. The Church meant everything to its Divine Founder. He loved it in anticipation, and counted no sacrifice too great for its security and happiness. St. Paul says, Christ loved the Church even as the true husband loves his wife and finds his chief joy in pleasing her. For what is the Church but the Body of Christ, of which He is the head and the disciples its several members? What is it but the extension of His Incarnation? The Church is the eyes and ears and mouth and hands and feet of Christ, to see and hear and speak for Him and run

on his errands of love and do His mighty works. He lives in and for His Church, and Christianity lives and flourishes only as it adheres to His Body, the Church.

The Church is not a hierarchy, existing for the exaltation of a priestly cast, exercising despotic power over the laity for exploitation or other unworthy ends. Neither is the Church a club or a guild, much less a secret order, with a carefully selected membership for mutual protection and congenial companionship. It is not made up of favorite individuals, or groups, who happen to be of kindred tastes, or socially on a level. It does not confine itself to localities or regions which promise most in the way of financial support or political influence. The Church is a Divine Society or organism which is equally open to all sorts and conditions of men, admitting freely and gladly each and all who can be persuaded to accept the reasonable and necessary conditions of membership. It is the whole body of believers in Christ and their children, all standing on an equal footing of obligation and opportunity for service and fellowship. In it each and every member may, by the faithful performance of duty, rise to position and power according to the measure of his gifts and talents.

While the Church has its recognized officers

and heads, they are not self-constituted or self-appointed, but chosen on their merits or supposed merits and fitness, by the general congregation of disciples, and set apart by their predecessors in office, no infallible head being recognized or acknowledged save Jesus Christ Himself. This, at least is the ideal, though as yet far from being realized in any part of the world.

Without this Divine organism it is safe to say that Christianity could not have perpetuated itself, much less have become the mighty power for good it is today. Like all great movements it had to have organization. This was necessary, not only for self-defense, but for propaganda and conquest. It had to be properly officered and have certain rules and regulations. It is in the world, not for selfish gain, but for the world's eternal good. To this end it must devise ways and means, and draw on every available resource; and this it could not do without organization, any more than a free state could exist and flourish without a constitution.

Now because the Church has been much misunderstood and perverted by ambitious and bigoted ecclesiastics it is discredited in the minds of many today. But this reason for discrediting and holding aloof from it cannot be justified or excused by

any fair minded man. While the Church is a Divine institution it is necessarily constituted of imperfect human beings who greatly need its fostering care. As a matter of fact the Church is designed for a school of learning and discipline for all sorts and conditions of men, not for a choice collection of saints. It is perfectly natural therefore that it should be subject to great abuses, and that evil-minded men and imposters should find their way into it and get in their mischievous work. There was one Judas Iscariot among the chosen of Christ, and if the Founder of the Church could be imposed upon under his immediate supervision, is it surprising that His Church should be still exposed to a like peril? It is owing to this fault of human weakness and perversity that it has come so far short of its high ideals and of reaching fully its great objective. Had it not betrayed this weakness it would be supreme and all-powerful for good in the world today, and long ago the Kingdom of God would have begun to enjoy universal dominion. But this was impossible in a world dominated by beings who are free moral agents. And so the progress of the Church in making the world its conquest has been seriously interrupted and retarded.

But this is not peculiar to the Church. All asso-

ciations for mutual protection and improvement have suffered from the same cause. No progress toward high ideals has ever been made without struggle and discouragement. The infirmities and faults of human nature are ever in evidence, and they take on as many evil and ugly forms as there is variety in human nature. Envy and jealousy, pride and selfishness, ignorance and superstition, hatred and violence and all the other faults and vices will soon or late manifest themselves to the detriment of the best organizations and institutions.

One of the greatest hindrances and drawbacks to the growth and welfare of the Church and finding its source in the narrowness and perversity of human nature, is the unhappy divisions which began to disturb it very early in its history. Overzealous ecclesiastics and propagandists in all periods have diligently formulated opinions and dogmas which they endeavored to force on the consciences of all others, and failing, started cults of their own and called them churches. The result has been unnumbered divisions and subdivisions, sadly wounding the Body of Christ who prayed that His disciples might be one even as He and the Father were one.

These unhappy divisions are caused not only by differences in points of doctrine, but also in

ecclesiastical government and polity. Some can see no possible unity for the Church that is not centered in one infallible human head, or at least in a college of high ecclesiastics, self-perpetuating and with all authority to bind and loose, and whose edicts and dogmas must be accepted and obeyed without question or demur. Their unspiritual minds cannot conceive of a unity that depends chiefly on voluntary submission to the authority of Christ. That is a conception entirely too broad and liberal for them. It would leave them totally devoid of power, the only kind of power they know. This erroneous view is held not only by the Roman and Eastern Church authorities, but also by a strong and influential minority in the Anglican communions. Others think of the Church as composed entirely of voluntary and self-constituted associations, each making its own rules and regulations and formulating its own creeds, regardless of tradition, holding itself in nowise conditioned or bound by those of any other association of Christians. They may believe in what is called a federation of churches, that is, in the right and even advisability of the different denominations agreeing to co-operate along certain lines for mutual improvement, social betterment, temperance and the enforcement of law, but each retaining its distinctive doctrines

and ecclesiastical polity. This is the attitude of the Congregationalists, the Baptists and other denominations of Christians of more or less prominence and influence.

Now both these extreme ideas must be abandoned or greatly modified before the Church can reasonably hope to become so united as to conserve and exercise its inherent potency for good in the world. One restricts liberty of thought and action to such an extent as to defeat its rightful aims and ends. There can be no spiritual growth or zeal for human betterment where there is no freedom of thought or spontaneity of effort permitted or countenanced. The tendency is to stimulate self-interest and the love of power for its own sake on the part of those in authority, rather than real interest in the Kingdom of God. A large degree of freedom to think and to act must be allowed in order to healthy growth and development. But if, on the other hand, this liberty knows no bounds—if it is under no restriction whatever—it soon begins to run to abuse, and the result is religious anarchy instead of spiritual unity. The peril of extremes is well-known to us all. It is one thing to compromise with error, and quite another to strike a middle ground where the error is avoided or rendered harmless and the truth is conserved.

The worst enemy of the truth is the man who cannot see but one side of it and refuses to reckon with those who see the other sides.

The only view of the Church as an organism which seems safe and sound is one which recognizes the necessity of some form of government and discipline, or polity, that will ever stand for and maintain those principles of truth and virtue essential to character building and social and civic betterment which Christ Himself clearly enunciated and insisted upon in His preaching and teaching. This means that there must be recognized some authority properly constituted to which all are bound to give diligent heed. It must be an authority that will exercise its power, not arbitrarily, but reasonably and righteously and without partiality, and at the same time removable for cause.

Now as some form or organization is essential to permanent unity, the question is, what is the form most approved and adapted to this end? As the Church is a Divine institution, built on the foundation of apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the head cornerstone, is it not reasonable to conclude that its polity should conform as nearly as possible to that which the Holy Spirit led the early disciples to adopt? True we may not know what that polity was in every detail; but we

cannot greatly err as to the essentials. Broadly speaking do we not find that it was in a very important way both episcopal and congregational? Apparently the whole body of the disciples had a voice in shaping the organization into a working agency and force. At the start they had all things common; they were equal in point of authority. No one lorded it over the others. The apostles, it is true, were looked up to as spiritual guides and teachers, but not as autocrats or prelates. They exercised no authority without taking the whole congregation into counsel. When the Seven deacons were chosen and set apart to their special ministry both the apostles and the rest of the disciples took an active part in the deliberations. The apostles did not act independently or arbitrarily. At the suggestion of the apostles the body of the disciples selected from among their number those whom they deemed best qualified to discharge the duties of that office and ministry, and the apostles set them apart to their duties by the laying on of hands with prayer. It is fair to conclude that this was the usual practice subsequently in making additions to the ministry, both as to deacons and presbyters, during the first century, though it is not expressly so stated. We also observe that very early in the history of the Church

the immediate successors of the apostles, or those, at least, who exercised certain functions of the apostles, began to be called bishops, a name which at first had been applied alike to all the presbyters. From this we draw the reasonable inference that it was intended from the beginning the Church should be under episcopal supervision; but by an episcopate not self-chosen and self-perpetuated, but chosen by the body of the disciples, each and every one having an equal voice in the selection. This tended both to safeguard the liberty of the individual and to conserve the best interests of the whole Church.

Now it seems to the writer that if this conception of the Church and its polity had always obtained it would never have suffered the many unhappy divisions we deplore today. It would have saved it from intolerance and bigotry on the one hand and from sectarianism and endless strife and discord on the other. It would have kept it from wordly ambition and every other hindrance to its healthy growth and influence. It would have been always united in the one great objective of winning the world to Christ and thereby bringing the nations and tribes into friendly relations, making war impossible and everywhere promoting peace and good will among men.

But this was more than could be expected of our poor and imperfect human nature. In fact had human nature been so susceptible and responsive to its best interests the task of saving the world would not have been involved, much less have cost the awful sacrifice of the life of the Son of God; for the world would not have needed saving. It would have been a different world from the first. In the nature of things that could not be, or God would have made it so. Therefore the problem has been and will long be that of bringing complete harmony out of the original chaos with which humanity began.

Nothing is intended in what has been said above to reflect either on the proposed federation of Churches or on non-episcopal communions commonly called Churches. Far be it from the writer to discredit what God has so obviously blessed. That the federation of churches is good as far as it goes there can be no reasonable question. As a step in the direction of real Christian unity it has undoubted merit. It brings Christians together on friendly relations and in good works and labors of love, thereby giving them some idea of what it means for brethren to dwell together in unity. Surely it is far better than the sectarian strife and discord which formerly so generally obtained. But as a permanent solution of the problem of Chris-

tian unity, or a cure for the unhappy division of Christendom, it cannot be depended upon or commended. The divisions will still exist and be only temporarily smoothed over at best.

As to the right of the non-episcopal communions to call themselves and to be called churches it is freely conceded. They are truly churches because they are congregations of believers in Christ. But the unfortunate thing about it is that so long as they remain separate and distinct from one another and from the historic Church, there can be no real or corporate unity. They continue rigidly independent and will refuse to recognize the claims of others in anything. Besides there are no sacramental ties to draw and hold them together. In this world of visibility something more than mystic ties are required to keep together and in working harmony the Body of Christ. There must be the outward sign or form, as well as the inward spirit or grace. In the historic episcopate we have this outward sign or form of unity because it reaches back to the early days of the apostolic Church in substance as we have it today. But where there is no such order of ministry recognized there is lacking an important link in the bond of unity. Conceded that it is better to have detached organizations of Christian workers than to have no

churches at all, yet how much better would it be if we had the outward as well as the inward bond of unity! It would do away with the unholy rivalry and the overlapping of denominational lines, with the consequent waste of time and means resulting from a half dozen or more congregations ministered to by as many half paid clergy, where two or three self-supporting congregations or parishes a reasonable distance apart and working in harmony under the same general head could do the necessary work and do it better. Besides, the demand for an efficient ministry, now so much greater than the supply, could be more readily met, and there would be many more available for the wider field.

Another important consideration which must not be forgotten demanding the retention of the historic episcopate is the outlook toward unity, however as yet far off, with the Roman and Eastern branches of Christendom. No conception of unity would ever be considered by either of them that proposed to give up the episcopacy, for that idea of ecclesiastical polity is vital to their religion. Therefore to give up episcopacy for the sake of uniting with the Protestant denominations would be suicidal. Open the door as widely as possible toward the non-episcopal churches, but do not sacrifice that fundamental element of the bond of

unity that would make unity with the universal Church impossible for all time.

Because human nature is what it is, it needs the Church for its reconstruction and perfecting. For the Church, notwithstanding the ills and abuses it has suffered from misguided and false leaders on the one hand, and sectarianism on the other, has been in all ages the greatest civic and moral force the world has ever known. It has stood, on the whole, for every virtue and every form of good. It has been a decided protest against immorality and all unrighteousness. It has always contained a sufficient number of souls who never bowed the knee to Baal to save it from the peril of utter failure in accomplishing its great mission. The gates of hell have not prevailed against it.

CHAPTER IX

THE WORD OF THE FATHER— THE HOLY SCRIPTURES

That some definite knowledge of the content of the Holy Scriptures, or the Bible, is essential to the Christian life and hope goes without the saying. Christianity and the Bible are so inter-related that they cannot be thought of as separate and distinct entities. The Bible is the Church's depository of truth, the Christian's text book, his chart and compass. It is to him the record of the living word; in its truth he lives, and apart from it he dies; he loses his hold on life. When one begins to deny or doubt the inspiration and divine authority of the Christian Scriptures one begins to drift hopelessly from one's moorings and soon or late fetches up in some form of skepticism, rationalism, or substitute for Christianity. He is as one drifting in the open sea without rudder, chart or compass. He is without God and without hope in the world.

As Christians we are bound to believe that the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments were given by inspiration of the Holy Spirit of God. What an early writer said of the Old Testament we believe may be said even more emphatically of the New: "No prophesy ever came by the will of man,

but men spake from God, being moved by the Holy Ghost.” Of all the books ever written there is none which contains so much self-evidence of its divine origin and character as the Bible. There is no other book, except as based on the comprehensive teaching of the Bible that gives a tithe of what it contains as to what one needs to know for one’s spiritual health and growth.

We believe the Bible contains a complete revelation of the mind and will of God toward mankind. It touches human life at every important point; provides for its every weakness and need; shows us how to live, how to rise to high ideals, and gives us, as the living word, the inspiration to rise and to attain. Taken in its completeness the Bible is the only book that fully satisfies man’s conception of the truth; and that is what his soul demands. As an old writer once said, “The truth is for man and man is for the truth.” Human nature demands the truth for its satisfaction and well-being. It is incomplete and restless without it. Without the truth man cannot understand himself—cannot have peace within—cannot rise in the scale of true manhood. Whoever thinks to live a life that is worthwhile without the truth is self-deceived; he is gambling on counterfeit values. So profoundly does man’s moral nature demand the truth that it

cannot rest until it finds it—till it is discovered by him. If he fail to find it he runs to some superstition, fiction or semblance of the truth to satisfy his longings.

But while man has inherently a conception of the truth, that is, a capacity to recognize and receive it when it is revealed to him, he does not in and of himself possess it. He has a place for it, a longing after it, a hunger for it and a mind to discern it; but not sufficient depth of vision to perceive it till it is revealed to him. His own mind unaided cannot penetrate its hidden depths. Here is where the written word comes to his relief and rescue. It discloses that form of the truth which human nature demands to satisfy its spiritual hunger. It discovers to man his true condition and destiny, gives him a better knowledge of himself, enlightens his mind and understanding on every point relative to his duty as a moral and responsible being, unfolds to him the means of rising above his material limitations and of reaching the highest level of moral excellence. It reveals to him, first of all, the unwelcome truth that he is a sinful being, guilty in the sight of God, spiritually helpless, and in peril of death eternal as a consequence. But no sooner has it brought him to this consciousness of his undone condition than it begins to reveal to

him the other and more welcome phase of the truth, which is that there is provided for him a way of relief and deliverance in the person and intervention of a divine Redeemer and Saviour. Thus, while the truth probes deeply the wound made by sin, it carries healing in its surgery. It does not leave the patient helpless and in despair, but leaves in him a well-grounded hope. “There is a tradition of the veiled image of Sais, that whosoever lifted the veil must die”; and the death was hopeless. Not so with those who lift the veil of truth. They must indeed be prepared to die, that is to sin and self-will, but not to the world of reality, for the death which they die is swallowed up of life.

Now as the whole content of divine truth for mankind is contained in the Holy Scriptures they are the source of information to consult by those who would find and know the truth. There is no other trustworthy resort. No man may attain to a knowledge of the truth and deny, or ignore these sacred writings. They were “written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope.” They are ours to “hear, read, mark, learn and inwardly digest”. This is essential to every true Christian life. Though the essential doctrines of our religion are quite within the compass of the ordinary mind,

they do not lie so near the surface that they may be apprehended without earnest and prayerful study. They are too profound and full of meaning for careless hearers or casual readers. Nothing in any line is of permanent worth that costs no price, much less that of greatest value.

The necessity of study and research is also manifest because the Bible does not, like a treatise, take up the different phases of divine truth categorically, or in any regular order of sequence. In fact, it is not one book, but many. It was written by a large number of writers and editors each, for the most part, working independently one of the other, covering a wide range of subjects and appearing at widely separate periods of history and varied stages of mental and moral development. Thus the Bible is what should be thought of as a sacred library, rather than a single book or volume, exhibiting many varieties of religious literature and learning.

Then, again, much of the Bible was written in a primitive age. It was all written before any important discoveries were made in the natural sciences, such as we know today. The writers knew practically nothing of geology, astronomy, biology or contemporary history. They wrote not only in an unscientific and unhistorical age, but in an age

of myth and legend, and an age, too, when the most crude ideas were entertained of the sacredness and value of human life; and though they were well-meaning and God-fearing men, they could not but be more or less influenced by these conditions when they were writing. They were not and did not claim to be amanuences of the Holy Spirit, taking down, word for word, the divine dictations, like a modern stenographer; but were men enjoying perfect freedom of thought, judgment, individuality and choice of method, desirous only of giving their people and race the benefit of their inspirations and discoveries. They were earnest seekers after God, with an ear to His word and will, and what they heard and felt they recorded to the best of their ability and understanding. That they never misunderstood the mind of the Spirit, that they erred in some details and judgments, that they were more or less influenced by the crudities of the times in which they lived, that they gave utterance at times to sentiments and feelings which a more advanced and enlightened age was bound to outgrow, there is indubitable evidence. It could not well be otherwise under the circumstances. But that they stood uncompromisingly for truth, purity, sobriety and righteousness, for justice, equity and charity, is everywhere manifest. Whatever their faults and

race-prejudices, they were rigidly fair-minded and honest. They never intentionally withheld the truth, no matter where it hit, nor bore false-witness, no matter how severely it reflected on themselves or others, enemy or friend. Thus the faults and sins of some of their great heroes, as Noah, Abraham, Jacob, Moses, David, Solomon and others, were not spared, and no apology or excuse was ever made for any of them for going wrong, no matter how much it might have seemed to their advantage as a people to cover up the facts. The same holds good in both Testaments; all of which goes to show that the writers were truly inspired by the Spirit of God, making their testimony and declarations profitable indeed for correction, for teaching, for reproof, for instruction which is in righteousness.

But while the acceptance of the Bible as a whole, or as in substance, the word of God, is a fundamental doctrine of the Christian Church, for reasons already given it is not essential that one reckon all parts of it as equally inspired and authoritative. The writers evidently enjoyed different degrees of inspiration, being more or less influenced by the times in which they lived and the greater or less uncertainty of their sources of information. We are not bound to take their word in every minor

particular, nor their ideas of right and wrong in every instance. To claim such infallibility is more than the facts will bear out or justify. Our Lord Himself, much as He loved the Old Testament which was the only Bible in his day, did not hesitate to criticise and qualify and in some cases even reject some of the primitive ideas and judgments of priests and lawgivers, particularly with reference to their rulings on retaliations, marriage and divorce, and the proper observance of the Sabbath day. The Levitical law forbade every kind of work on the Sabbath day, even to the gathering of a few sticks of wood to make a fire to cook a meal for one's family, under penalty of death. But Jesus taught that "the Sabbath was made for man and not man for the Sabbath;" and at the same time He justified His disciples in plucking ears of corn on the Sabbath to appease their hunger. Yet on the whole Jesus held the Old Testament in highest esteem and reverence, quoting it confidently and freely to prove the truth of His doctrines and to repel the appeals and sophistries of the evil spirit. He held it in no less high regard because it was so truly human, and all the more because its defects and limitations were so few and inconsequential.

But some may say, as many indeed have said, Does not the concession that there are mistakes in

the Bible, that not all the statements will bear close scrutiny, discredit it as a whole? If it err in any detail or particular how are we to know that it is trustworthy in anything? If it is in substance the word of God how can it contain anything contrary to fact or reason? It must be confessed that these questions are more easily asked than answered. On their face they seem to admit of but one answer, and that is the Bible must be inerrant in every thought and word, or it is no more inspired or authoritative than any other good book or writing. But there are a number of arguments to the contrary which must be taken into consideration. In the first place, the Scriptures make no claim that they are inerrant in every point and detail. Neither lawgiver, poet or prophet positively asserts his infallibility. They were all men of strongest convictions, honest and earnest servants of God and obviously moved by the Spirit of God to write. But they were conscious of their own limitations in their efforts to convey the messages which came to them from God. Then, again, the fact that the Lord Himself did not hesitate to challenge some of their sayings and judgments makes it not only tenable and safe to disclaim infallibility for the inspired penmen, but the only honest and reasonable position to maintain.

One of the poorest friends of the sacred writings though he does not know it, is the literalist—the man who stands obstinately for verbal inspiration. He is himself blinded by the letter and he makes blind all his credulous followers. It is a case of the blind leading the blind. It is the man who is capable of looking deeper than the letter and is able to discern the truth who is its truest friend. The Scribes and Pharisees were the literalists of Christs' day, and we all know how they stood out against the truth. To them the letter of the law and the prophets was everything and the spirit of their teachings was little or nothing. They were so blinded by the letter of their Scriptures and traditions that when their long-looked for Messiah appeared they stubbornly rejected and persecuted Him. They turned deaf ears to his teachings, misrepresented Him and caused Him to be put cruelly to death. They would have none of Him. He did not fit into their narrow groove.

The same spirit has always obtained among slaves to the letter. It was true of the Montanists of the second century, and the earlier Lutherans and other reformers embodied it in some of their symbols. There is nothing more blinding than this form of slavery, and it is a blindness that is far-reaching and most blighting in its effects. It makes

men narrow-minded and uncharitable, bigoted and intolerant in their spirit. It is the fertile soil of contention and persecution. It finds heretics among the most saintly men and women and relentlessly consigns them to perdition. It has done more to stimulate and foster the unhappy divisions of Christendom than any other factor or influence.

The best friends of the Bible, those most benefited by its contents, are those who read it with open and discerning minds, and not to be discouraged or dismayed by the discovery of some things in it not literally accurate or in perfect accord with facts and judgments known and approved in a later and more enlightened age. They are able to grasp its deeper meaning and to discern its most helpful truths and sentiments, and are not perturbed by what does not appeal to them as strictly true and important. Thus when they read the record of cruelties and severities attributed by the writers direct to Jehovah which would do credit to a savage race or an inhuman autocrat or despot they do not feel bound to accept the statement as authoritative; or when they read the imprecatory psalms which call upon God to pour down vengeance without mercy on His and their enemies from the least to the greatest, they do not feel themselves obliged to join with the suppliants in

their feelings of hatred and retaliation. They understand with Paul that “we have the treasures of Holy writ in earthen vessels”, and that they must be received and read as such. It is such discerning students of the Word who get most light and help and comfort out of it. While no slaves to the letter, they are persuaded that the Bible is so replete with divine wisdom and truth it will bear the most careful and searching examination—that when the so-called higher criticism has gone its length, it will stand the test and shine all the brighter, proving that it came truly from God, has his stamp on its every page, and as such may be banked upon by every soul in quest of knowledge which will make him wise unto salvation. More and more he will find in both the Old and New Testaments what St. Paul declared of the Old, that “they were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope”.

In concluding this chapter on the Holy Scriptures no words could be more to the point than those of Professor Orr in the last paragraph of his learned treatise on Revelation and Inspiration: In the last resort, the proof of the inspiration of the Bible—not, indeed, in every particular, but in the essential message—is to be found in the life-

giving effects which that message has produced wherever its word of truth has gone forth. This is the truth for the argument for inspiration based on the witness of the Holy Spirit. The Bible has the qualities claimed for it as an inspired book. Those qualities, on the other hand, nothing but inspiration could impart. It leads to God and Christ; it gives light on the deepest problems of life, death and eternity; it discovers the way of deliverance from sin; it makes men new creatures; it furnishes the man of God completely for every good work. That it possesses these qualities history and experience through all the centuries have attested; its saving, sanctifying and civilizing effects among all the races of men in all the world attest it still. The Word of God is a pure word; a word never found wanting by those who rest themselves upon it. The Bible that embraces this word will retain its distinction as the *Book of Inspiration* till the end of time.”

CHAPTER X

COMMUNION WITH THE FATHER—PRAYER

We come now to consider one of the great essentials of our religion which probably presents greater difficulties to the average mind than any other in our reckoning. All Christians, not to speak of the adherents of other religions, believe in communion with God, or prayer, whether or not they practice it in form or fact. But to give a logical reason for their belief in it would puzzle most of them not a little. The difficulty they find obtains chiefly in the desire to reconcile the call to prayer with the belief that God is all-powerful and wise and good and knows all our needs before we ask Him. Why should we be required or expected to entreat Him to do for us what we are taught He is so able and willing to do, and can have no motive for refusing us?

Then, again, why should we expect God to change his plans or purposes towards us for our asking under any circumstances which might arise when all his plans and purposes must have been the best from the beginning? Are not His laws so just and good that to make any change in them at our request would be inconsistent and

subversive of the best interests of His eternal Kingdom?

It must be confessed that these questions as to the reasonableness and utility of prayer are formidable, to say the least, and it is no wonder that many have stumbled over them and been sorely tempted to abandon it as a means of grace. Yet we maintain that the questions are not unanswerable, though the answers may not be easy to give, and will not satisfy every skeptical mind, particularly those who do not love to pray.

In the first place, we must bear in mind that any attempt to vindicate the reasonableness and worth of prayer must consist with the idea of the unchangeableness of God's laws and purposes. In other words, our prayers must never assume that God will break or disregard any of His laws for our asking; for, as we have seen, His laws are necessarily perfect, coming, as they do, from the most perfect Source in the universe. What then is the solution of the problem? How may prayer be successfully defended and justified?

In the opinion of the writer no better answer has ever been given than that of H. E. Fosdick in his little book of devotions, entitled, "The Meaning of Prayer." He says, "You can open the way to God to do what He wants to do. Prayer cannot

change God's purposes, but prayer can release it. God cannot do for the man with the closed heart what He can do for the man with the open heart. You can give God a chance to work His will in and for and through you. Prayer is simply giving the wise and good God an opportunity to do what His wisdom and love want done." (P. 65.) To be sure this solution of the problem will not convince the determinist nor any of those skeptics who have fully decided in their own minds that no law of God or of nature can be directed or deflected in any channel or in any way whatever varying an iota from its original bent or trend. But these declaimers against the utility of prayer will be found invariably to be unbelievers in God as a Person, or as in any sense personal. Their God, if they may be said to have any, is not a being capable of sympathizing with His creatures, or having their highest good eternally in mind; but one who is Himself immutable law and utterly impassive in His nature. Of course such a Deity could not hear or answer prayer. But if God be a Person in the sense that He is a Being who thinks and feels and exercises will-power like any other intelligent and rational being, as for example man, only on an immeasurably larger scale, then it cannot be unreasonable that He should be moved with com-

passion and gladly listen to the cries of His children, and so to direct and unfold His holy and benevolent purposes for their highest good. He waits to be gracious—longs for the opportunity to respond to every heart-opening. So it all depends on what one's conception of God is as to whether one can believe in prayer. An impersonal deity is one thing and a personal God is quite another. One might as well call on a stone for sympathy or help as to call upon the former, but the other is a heart of flesh and not of stone. He is full of compassion.

We do not, however, have to prove the reasonableness of prayer to be persuaded of the utility and value of it. As Christians we have a more sure word of defense and confirmation. We have both the admonition and the example of our Lord. He both made constant use of this means of grace and helpfulness in His ministry and taught it diligently to His disciples. It would seem that if any one ever lived who needed not to resort to prayer to obtain the help of God it was Jesus Christ; for He lived every hour of His short and eventful life close to the heart of His Father so that every want of His soul must have been at His command. Yet according to the Evangelists no man ever spent more of his quiet hours in communion with God than the Son of

man. It is said that the entire night was sometimes spent in this attitude, particularly when in anticipation of some great function, event or experience. And such praying! Did He doubt for a moment that His Father heard Him? It was His only source of companionship and assurance in these exigencies. There was no other to whom He could go because no other as yet understood His great mission in the world. Even His chosen apostles could not watch with Him a single hour during His agony in the garden, or His trial before Pilate.

That Jesus diligently taught His disciples to pray there is abundant evidence. He exhorted them to pray against the danger of being led into temptation; to pray to their Heavenly Father in secret; to ask that they might receive; to pray to God to send more laborers into his harvest; to pray even for their enemies, those who despitefully used them and persecuted them. He told them always to pray and not to faint; in a word He told them to lay all their wants and worries before their Heavenly Father and never doubt that He would hear and care for them. Withal He gave them a simple but all inclusive form of prayer as a sample of the kind of praying most pleasing to God and that could not fail of obtaining a favorable answer. It was a prayer, too, in keeping with the idea that they would not be heard for their much speaking.

Up to that time the disciples had not given much time or thought to offering prayer directly to God. They often came to Jesus with their wants, beseeching Him to do for them because they had learned that He was most compassionate and responsive. But they had no idea that God was like Him in that respect. The scribes and Pharisees had given them a very different idea of God from that. But after the departure of Jesus they recalled His words, and then, like Him, they went with all confidence to the Father. They had learned to see God in the face of Jesus Christ. So much store did they set on the utility and power of prayer that they met daily for that unfailing source of spiritual strength and helpfulness; and the apostles, in particular, in order to find more time for communion with God together with the preaching of the word, were moved to call for and solemnly set apart an order of deacons to relieve them in some measure of the growing charitable work among the widows and orphans which was consuming so much of their time and strength as to interfere with their wider calling and commission. It was not that they had lost any of their concern for these worthy objects of charity, but that they might improve the widening opportunities for spreading the knowledge of Christ and His Kingdom to a larger clientele. They

had, in fact, an outlook toward an universal altruism, that is, the saving of all mankind from the sins of selfishness and religious indifference.

In this wider field of evangelism it is noticeable that the apostles set prayer on an equal footing with the preaching of the word. They obviously felt that the spread of the Gospel could not be effectually done without their keeping very close to the ear of God. "We will continue steadfastly in prayer and in the preaching of the word." (Acts 6:4.) Thus the original disciples of Christ, the founders under Him of the Church, believed thoroughly in prayer. It was cardinal in their religion and life. The best evidence that they believed in it is that *they prayed*. Prayer was of their very being—their vital breath. It was their continuous and unfailing resort. They lived in the atmosphere of prayer. And what trials and persecutions it carried them through! Prison doors swung open of their own accord, and no power on earth could stop their mouths, or hinder them from bearing witness to the truth.

But why pursue further the arguments for the utility and efficacy of prayer? It is a matter of experience rather than argument. The great proof of the worth of prayer is praying. Only those who pray are likely to be persuaded of its utility. The

prayerless souls will always be skeptical. The less men pray the less faith they have in it. We know that the faithful in Christ in all ages were instant in prayer in season and out of season. It was their unfailing resort in times of discouragement and persecution, and it sustained every martyr for the faith. All the great mystics, reformers and missionaries have ever been men and women of prayer. The harder they worked and the greater their success the more they prayed.

The same is ever true. Prayer is as much in evidence today among earnest Christian workers as in any previous age or period. Missionaries, Christian educators and social service workers have their regular hours of prayer and meditation, finding in them a genuine source of helpfulness and consolation. They do not indeed expect miracles in the way of answers, but they do expect and do obtain substantial encouragement and support in their efforts to extend the principles of the Kingdom of God and his righteousness among mankind. They would not have the courage or heart to work in this capacity without this source of spiritual strength and helpfulness.

Something should be said in this connection to correct wrong impressions concerning prayer which have tended to discredit it with not a few critics

and questioners. Many have the notion that prayer is a pious way of begging. They think of it chiefly as obtaining material and tangible benefits and blessings straight from God for the mere asking, without any exertion or co-operation on their part. There could be no greater mistake. True prayer is not begging. The devout soul is never a beggar. When one prays one does not ask God to do for him what he has no mind to do for himself; he asks for the opportunity to earn or to come honestly by the things that he feels he needs. He is a humble suppliant, but not a beggar.

Nowhere is the rule that what one would obtain one must work for more in force than in the religion of Jesus Christ; for that religion is in perfect keeping with the laws of life. Unless one works, or is willing to work, one cannot pray, for he is not in the spirit of prayer. To get in the spirit of prayer one must get into the harness for work. Prayer and a mind to work go hand in hand. So Nehemiah found it when he was rebuilding the walls of Jerusalem. And those who pray best and most are not always those who spend most time on their knees, though that is a very natural and proper attitude for prayer. The praying souls are those who live constantly in the atmosphere of God, even as little children live almost unconsciously in the security

of their parents' nearness and protection. The truth is men are always praying when they are striving earnestly in the fear of God to obtain the things needful for body and soul. They are workers together with God. As has been forcibly said, "Men do not get their food by an invocation of divine Providence; they get it by digging and planting and reaping and grinding and baking." They do not tempt God by saying that the world owes them a living and why should they be expected to work for it?

The fact is that one who prays for benefits or favors which one has no mind to work for prays to an impossible Deity. There is no such God in the universe. The true God loves his moral creatures too well to do for them what He has endued them with power and skill to do for themselves. He is so near us that He does for us chiefly by working with and in us.

The whole world is, under God, organized to respond to the appeal and power of prayer. As some one has said, "The chemistry of the universe is at the disposal of the men and women who pray in spirit; and all the forces of nature come to their aid and help to answer their prayers." But the world must be given a square deal. We must work and pray in harmony with its just and beneficent

laws. We must not expect the laws of God or of nature to conform to our selfish desires and purposes. We cannot have too much faith in the power and will of God to answer prayer provided we are always ready to employ the means and remedies He has put within our reach to help towards their answer. This principle applies to the sick as well as to the healthy. Prayer for the sick is always proper and helpful; the wise physician always welcomes it. But to expect the sick to get well without proper nursing and the wise and faithful use of nature's remedies is both impious and presumptuous. It defies both God and true science.

Above all we must never forget that the blessing God longs most to give us is his Holy Spirit—the Spirit of His Son who rendered perfect obedience to His will and was so thoroughly unselfish and pure and good that no good thing could be withheld from Him. In comparing the different gospels on this point we find that the gift of the Holy Spirit and God's gifts to His children mean one and the same thing. (Matt. 6:11, Luk. 11:13.) The truth would seem to be that no prayer for either temporal or spiritual blessings is acceptable to God that is not offered "in the Holy Spirit," or the Spirit of Christ. There can be no good things for those who care not for the Spirit of God.

Thus far we have been considering prayer in the light of petition, or supplication, that is, making known our wants to God. But we must bear in mind that though this is an important factor of prayer, it is by no means the sum of it. Prayer, in its wider meaning, embraces not only petition, but also intercession, confession, consecration, aspiration, adoration, thanksgiving and praise. Prayer is the synthesis of whatever has to do, either directly or indirectly, with the worship of God. For what is prayer but communion with God? Whether the worshipper gives most thought to petition, confession of sin, intercession, meditation or thanksgiving, God is the one great center of his devotions. It is the act of holding converse or communion with God. It is holding such communion or fellowship with the Father as need not be expressed in the form of words; for we are told that we are not heard for our much speaking. To pray acceptably one must be a good listener, always ready to hear what God has to say. The most devout and earnest man is one who has always an ear open to hear the still voice that spoke to Elijah in Horeb. As has been said, "One of the strongest misconceptions of prayer is that it consists chiefly of talking to God, whereas the best part of prayer is our listening to God." The boy Samuel learned this when God

spoke to him in the silent hours of the night. "Speak Lord, for thy servant heareth." A psalmist learned the same important lesson in his day: "I will hear what the Lord will say unto me, for He will speak peace unto His people and unto his saints." It is not improbable that the long hours of the night which our Lord spent in prayer during his ministry were occupied mainly in listening to His Father's words of counsel and encouragement. When one comes to this fuller conception of prayer, as that of communion with God, one will not be greatly disappointed if one does not obtain the answer one looked for or particularly desired. He will come to realize more and more that the God to whom he prays knows best what is good for him and he will feel that after all his prayer has been answered, and in a really better way than he desired. One half of the first petition of the Lord's Prayer is, "Thy will be done." God's will is always good will, no matter whether it seems to work out to our advantage or not; so it is always safe to make it impliedly, at least, in all our devotions. God has His own way of answering prayer, and we may be perfectly sure that it is the best way. Sometimes it seems far afield and is very disheartening. We feel that He is very severe in His judgments and that He can have no patience with us, and many

times we make up our minds that He cannot or will not answer. But He knows best, and in the long run we will find that He has by no means ignored our petitions and heart-longings. Often the answers come in apparent refusals, but in the end it will be found that what He has to bestow is far better than we had in mind in asking. An anonymous writer has put this great truth in striking epigram:

“He asked for strength that he might achieve;
He was made weak that he might obey.

He asked for health that he might do greater things;

He was given infirmity that he might do better things.

He asked for riches that he might be happy;
He was given poverty that he might be wise.

He asked for power that he might have the praise of men;

He was given weakness that he might feel the need of God.

He asked for all things that he might enjoy life;

He was given life that he might enjoy all things.

He has received nothing he asked for, *all* that he hoped for.

His prayer is answered, he is most blest.”

CHAPTER XI

THE SACRAMENTS OF THE GOSPEL

The English and the American Church Catechisms declare that the Sacraments of Baptism and the Supper of the Lord are generally (meaning universally) necessary to salvation. This is certainly a very strong affirmation. In what sense, if any, can it be reckoned as true? Can it be true in the sense that the salvation of God is restricted to those who have been fortunate enough to have received Baptism with or in water according to the Scriptural formula, and who with some degree of regularity partake of the Holy Communion? It all depends on what meaning we attach to the word "salvation". If we mean by it life after death, or life eternal, then it must be said that the assertion of the Catechism cannot be true or justified; for we cannot reasonably doubt that many have been and will be finally saved who never received either of the Sacraments of the Gospel. There were godly men and women in the world in great numbers before Christ came, and also since, who never so much as heard his name, who certainly could not have conformed to such a condition of salvation. There were mystics among the adherents of other religions

and are today, living in closest fellowship with God quite independently of the Sacraments of the Gospel. There were some devout but mistaken souls in the early Church who died suddenly without receiving Baptism, having postponed it through fear that if they should happen to sin after baptism they would be hopelessly lost. Then there is a long list of Godly men and women such as the Quakers in modern times, persons of most exemplary Christian spirit, fully persuaded in their own minds that spiritual baptism and spiritual communion alone are all that is necessary, and do not depend on the outward and visible signs. Shall these be condemned as unworthy of eternal life? We may regard them as mistaken, and rightly; but we have no right to judge them as hopelessly lost.

In what sense then can these Sacraments be necessary to salvation? Certainly not in the same sense that faith in God and in the Gospel is necessary; nor in the sense that common honesty, or purity of life, or charity towards all men, is necessary; for these are inseparable from the Christian life. They are of the very substance of Godli-
ness. They are in and of themselves salvation. Whosoever is in possession of these virtues is saved already. They are not to be reckoned as means of grace; they are the great objective. Apart from them there is no such thing as salvation.

Not so with the Sacraments. They are not in themselves salvation, nor their formal observance. The Kingdom of God is not eating and drinking, even though it be the sacrament of Christ's Body and Blood. "The Kingdom of God is righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Ghost." The sacraments of the Gospel are appointed means of grace which, if humbly and penitently received by the faithful, are powerful agencies in bringing and keeping them in fellowship with God and the brethren. Why this is true it may not be easy to explain. But this much may be said, that as long as we live in these material frames we must depend very much on outward signs and forms to bind us together and to keep us in fellowship with God. Flesh and spirit are so closely intertwined and related that we cannot draw the line between them. We cannot treat body and soul as distinct and separate entities. Whether or not the soul is or ever will be able to function without some kind of a body we do not know; but we do know that it is not wont to do so now. We very naturally associate our thinking activities with the head or brain, our feelings and emotions with the heart, and our strength with bone and muscle. They seem to be vital parts of our very being—apparently inseparable therefrom. This is not to say that thought,

emotion and strength are products of brain, heart and muscle respectively; for we believe, with William James, that these vital organs function as transmitters of thought, feeling and strength; not as producers. In this light all life may be said to be sacramental. Whether we eat or drink, work or play, it is the mind, the soul, that is most deeply concerned, though dependent on the body as the outward and visible expression of the reality.

Recognizing this fact in human nature our Lord wisely and lovingly provided for it in laying the foundation of His Church and Kingdom. He chose and appointed the most common and useful elements and products of nature, elements made sacred by their deep and far-reaching associations in the old order, to signify the essentials of His Kingdom, fit symbols of purity, spiritual strength and fellowship. What more simple and significant substance than water could have been chosen to represent separation from the world, the flesh and the devil; and what more fitting product of nature than bread and the fruit of the vine to set forth spiritual nourishment and sacred fellowship! The very simplicity and commonness of the elements appointed, elements so universally obtainable in every age and zone, and so ready at hand, were greatly in their favor; for they would suggest and

convey the truth that the salvation of God is not something to be purchased with a great price by the recipient, but the free gift of God on the simple and reasonable conditions of repentance and faith. Do they not appeal to us in strongest terms? Do they not find a ready and glad response in our better natures? No wonder the historic Church has always held these sacraments of the Gospel in highest esteem and reverence. With all the abuses they have suffered at the hands of misguided and erring men, much as they have been misunderstood and distorted and made to stand for something they were never intended to represent, still they have proved themselves indispensable to the Church's growth and perpetuity; and it is evident that Christianity would never have become the great power for good it is today, if indeed it would be in evidence at all, had it not been for the agency and influence of these sacraments. While the unhappy and often bitter controversies over their meaning and efficacy have discredited them in the minds of many, these very contentions have served to keep attention upon them and thereby stimulated thoughtfulness and a higher appreciation of their importance and helpfulness.

May it not be in this sense more than in any other that the affirmation of the Catechism is true

with reference to these sacraments? It means that they are necessary to the very existence and perpetuity of the organized Body of Christ in the world. Without them there would be no Kingdom of God in its larger meaning. There would be here and there a thoughtful and devout soul great enough to not have to depend on outward signs and tokens, however sacred and helpful, to keep them true to the voice of conscience, like a Socrates, a Seneca or a Lincoln; but the great mass of humanity would live regardless of the claims of God and His laws of good will and righteousness. It requires the outward signs and tokens made sacred by the word of the Lord to hold mankind in leash. Not that there is any magical dynamic in them to bring and hold them in communion and fellowship; not that there is any power or virtue in them *per se* to bind and to save; but as tokens and pledges under God of submission and fellowship, and as channels of His saving grace and love.

It is not, however, essential to the validity or efficacy of the sacraments of the Gospel that one thoroughly understand their meaning and purpose. Whether or not one believes in the doctrine of baptismal regeneration, or whether one accepts or doubts the doctrine of the real objective presence of Christ in the consecrated bread and wine of the

altar, one may lawfully receive them provided he does so reverently, and with some sense of unworthiness, in humility and charity and with desire and purpose of heart to lead a new life. In other words, a worthy motive in their reception is far more important than a correct understanding.

As has already been indicated, one thing that one may not look for in these sacraments is that they will work in one, *opus operatum*, any change for the better in one's character. They are not self-operative. All depends on whether one is open-minded and open-hearted. To be benefited by them one must not only believe in their Divine appointment and efficacy, but must also comply with certain simple and very important conditions of their right reception. Without compliance with these conditions, no matter how correct or orthodox one's views of the content of these sacraments, nor how scrupulously, or how pious in attitude, one receives them, the act will not only not contribute to one's salvation, but rather to his condemnation; for such reception is but self-deception.

Over the age-long controversy as to the nature of these sacraments, whether the dogma of baptismal regeneration is true, and if true in what sense, and whether or not there is a real objective presence of Christ in the Holy Eucharist, it is not

the design of this article to attempt to settle. The writer is far from thinking himself qualified for such a task. While holding both Sacraments in great reverence, and believing that the very Christ gives Himself mystically in them to the humble and contrite, the writer is only anxious to emphasize the importance of using them in a right spirit, and with the perfect understanding that they can and will save no one without one's hearty co-operation. All depends on that, no matter how much they may be held in reverence. They are distinctively means, or channels, of Divine grace, but they cannot do their gracious work except in willing and responsive souls. They are what rain and sunshine are to the soil, or earth. As they betoken an abundant harvest only when the husbandman diligently prepares and cultivates the soil and sows the good seed, so the sacraments must depend for their efficacy on our "giving all diligence to make our calling and election sure."

Of one thing with reference to the Sacrament of the Eucharist the author is fully persuaded, and that is that the mediaeval dogma of transubstantiation cannot be true; for as our article of religion says, "It overthrows the nature of a sacrament and gives occasion to many superstitions." If at the priest's utterance of the words of consecration

the bread and wine are miraculously changed into the substance of the body and blood of Christ, then they are no longer sacred signs and pledges at all, but the very reality itself. The sacrament entirely disappears, and the real sacrifice obtains. The Lord's sufferings and death are as nearly as possible repeated at every Eucharist. The same may be said of those modifications of this dogma, such as consubstantiation, impannation and subpannation, which also imply a material presence of the body and blood of Christ in the consecrated elements.

Any theory or dogma that involves or implies a miraculous physical change in the elements of the Eucharist when consecrated is false and misleading, in the opinion of the writer; for it moves to great abuses among the ignorant and superstitious. Millions have been led to pay their devotions to the outward form or sign of the Lord's presence instead of the Lord Himself. They have and do carry the Sacrament in procession to be gazed upon and worshipped, just as though it were the living Christ, and the over-credulous have gotten it by fair or by foul means to keep it in their possession as a charm, believing it to possess some magical or miraculous influence for their protection and safety, and withal as a sure token of good luck.

It is the prostitution of the sacrament rather than its lawful use. It serves to make this great means of grace a substitute for virtue and personal worth.

Another well-meant, but in the opinion of the writer, a sadly mistaken theory of the Sacrament of the Eucharist held by some in the Church, is that one of its offices is to keep God propitious or reconciled toward mankind by reminding Him continuously or often of the great sacrifice His Son made for us on the cross. It is maintained that in the celebration of the Eucharist we plead the meritorious sacrifice of Christ in order to keep the Divine wrath abated and inoperative toward us. In other words, we are doing by the frequent celebration of this Sacrament on earth what Jesus, as our Intercessor, is supposed to be doing perpetually in heaven—pleading in our behalf the merits of His atoning sacrifice. A well-known priest of the Church of England, Vernon Stanley, puts it in this way; “Before He (Christ) ascended to exercise His office as our great High Priest, He ordained a great mystical service, in which we, on earth, may have a real part in what He does above. Jesus Christ is now pleading the merits of His life and death before the face of the Eternal Father, and He has given us the means of doing the same on earth. This service” he says, “is the Holy Euchar-

ist." This theory is built on a very doubtful interpretation of the words of our Lord as reported by St. Luke and St. Paul: "Do this in remembrance of me For as often as ye eat this bread and drink this cup ye do show the Lord's death until He come." An effort is made to prove that the words, "Do this in remembrance of me," should be rendered, "Offer this as a memorial of me," and that the showing of the Lord's death, in the second passage, is for the purpose of *moving* the Divine compassion toward the penitent instead of *declaring* the Divine compassion, a very different thing. Such an interpretation of these words of Institution of the Eucharist is purely gratuitous. It is a perversion of Christ's teaching too palpable to require refutation. The God whom Jesus revealed and manifested and whom Paul preached is altogether too great and loving a Father to ever need to be reminded of the sacrifice His beloved Son made for the sins of the world. As we saw in the article on the Atonement, from the beginning God was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself, not imputing to them their trespasses. Can it be possible that He now needs to be everlastingly reminded of that great sacrifice for sin, a sacrifice in which He Himself was so deeply involved, to keep his wrath abated?

The true meaning of these words of our Lord pronounced at the Institution of the Eucharist is without doubt that which appears on the surface. It was above all to keep the disciples mindful of their great indebtedness to God for the gift of His Son and thereby bind them in closest possible fellowship with their Lord and one another, and at the same time to proclaim the love of God to all mankind.

Thus the Holy Eucharist is the Church's great Gospel sermon as well as its highest expression of worship. It is the most solemn and impressive proclamation of the sacrifice of the death of Christ for the sins of the world. So long as the Holy Supper is duly and faithfully celebrated in the Church of God the great doctrine of the atonement, or reconciliation, will never be lost sight of or undervalued, no matter how widely the preacher may depart from the Gospel and dwell on other topics in his pulpit utterances. The Eucharist will ever speak for itself, for it proclaims by word and manual act the veritable Gospel, "the Lord's death until He comes." It keeps the heart of the Gospel burning and shining in the world, whether or not the world receives it. Without doubt this is what St. Paul understood Christ to mean when he quoted Him as saying: "Do this in remembrance of me . . .

For as often as ye eat this bread and drink this cup, ye do show (proclaim, R. V.) the Lord's death until He comes."

This is not to say, however, that the Eucharist is not an act or an offering to God on the part of those engaged in its celebration. On the contrary it ought to be regarded as the most solemn form of prayer in our worship of God. It brings us into closest communion and fellowship with the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. In Christ we offer both our souls and bodies as a living sacrifice to God, not indeed thereby to merit His forgiveness and favor; but rather that our hearts may be open to Him, making it possible for Him to find a way to grant us what His heart longs to. Of all times to pray there is none more favorable than at a celebration of the Holy Communion. Therein Christ, our Mediator and Redeemer, is visualized by word and manual act,—in a sacred sign or sacrament which He Himself ordained; and how can we fail to pour out our hearts in prayer and thanksgiving! When Jesus was teaching His disciples how to pray, He told them to ask the Father in His name. Now as seen in the chapter on Prayer, to pray in the name of Christ is to pray in His spirit, or as Jude expresses it, it is "praying in the Holy Ghost." If ever there was a time when

one should be more in the spirit of prayer than another it is when one is in the act of drawing near to God in the Sacrament of the Body and Blood of Christ. Then, of all times, are we able to say out of the fulness of our hearts, "Through Jesus Christ our Lord." For if we have received the Sacrament worthily, that is, discerning the Lord's Body, then we have the pledge and assurance that He dwells in us and we in Him.

Nor should it be forgotten that this Sacrament of the Gospel is distinctively an act and office of thanksgiving. It is a Eucharist, that is, a Thanksgiving, even as St. Paul calls it. There is no gospel duty urged upon us more explicitly than that of being devoutly thankful. Jesus commended but one of the ten lepers whom He healed and sent to the priest for inspection, and that was the Samaritan who alone returned to give thanks to his Healer. St. Paul, in all his epistles, never failed to remind the disciples of the supreme duty of thanksgiving. Why so urgent this duty? Because a thankful soul is always open towards God and responsive to His will and benediction.

In the light of these facts and considerations and many others which might be named, we cannot fail to see in these Sacraments of the Gospel an essential condition to completeness of Christian

character and salvation. The Church and the world would be unspeakably poorer without them, if indeed there would be any church in the world today. Surely there would be little to attract and bind together even spiritually minded men and women, to say nothing of the rest of mankind, if the Lord had not ordained and left these sacred signs and pledges of His love and sacrifice to be perpetually observed.

CHAPTER XII

CHRISTIAN MISSIONS

We have now reached, in the study of the Great Essentials of the Religion of Jesus Christ, a subject which in point of importance cannot possibly be overstated. In fact Missions is just what Christianity stands for above every other objective in the world. It means the wide-spread extension of the Kingdom of God among mankind. It is the interpretation and realization of the Incarnation. It is what God sent His Son into the world to initiate and mightily set forward. It was God's great love for the whole world of mankind that moved Him to make so great a sacrifice. Not to the tribes of Israel only, but to every race and tribe, Jesus said, "I am the light of the world." The Son of man came into the world to save that which was lost. He tasted death for every man. When He gave his great commission to His chosen He said, "Go into all the world; make disciples of all the nations." (Matt. 28.) St. Luke says He commanded "that repentance and remission of sins be preached in His name unto all the nations, beginning from Jerusalem." Could any words be more definite, explicit or broader in their meaning?

Surely not. Then what is left for us to do but to obey? Can there be any higher or more binding obligation?

Christianity is distinctively a missionary religion. This is its high and holy vocation. It has no other. The world is its field. Where there is no missionary spirit, there is no Christianity. The Missionary Spirit is the charter of the Church. This is the conviction of every intelligent man who is Christian in something more than in name. There can be no exception to this rule. People who say they do not believe in missions have never understood Christianity nor Christ. When they once come to know Christ they will gladly respond to the call; they will make the great cause of missions first in their reckoning and first in their prayers.

This is not saying that there are not many good people who do not believe in missions; there are. It is simply to say that they do not know Jesus Christ. Did they know Him they would possess the missionary spirit, for they would possess *His* Spirit. The excuse that many make for not believing in missions is that there are too many heathen at home. Yes, and there always will be as long as so many who profess the Christian faith declare their aversion to foreign missions. They

show by that attitude that they have not the spirit that appeals to the “heathen at home”. As a matter of fact the heathen at home do not live far beyond the lines of their own parish.

The reason Christian missions are of supreme moment is because Jesus Christ is the great need of mankind. There are indeed other great religions in the world, and they each and all, perhaps, have some points of merit. They teach much that is true and good. There is no use in denying that fact. On the contrary we are glad to know that it is true. But besides teaching much that is false and superstitious, their greatest defect is that they provide no remedy for the disease of sin and no source of power to overcome human weakness. In short they offer the soul no Saviour. Buddhism, undoubtedly the best of all the ethnic religions, with all its merits, betrays this fundamental defect. The founder of this great religion, in one of his addresses to his followers, said, “Go forth, O brethren, and wander over the world for the sake of the many, out of compassion for the world, for the welfare of the many, for the good and the weal and the gain of gods and men. . . . Proclaim the teaching lovely in its origin, lovely in its progress, and lovely in its consummation, both in its spirit and in the letter. Set forth the higher life in all its

fulness and all its purity.” Is not this a very noble appeal and message? Why should people with such high ideals set before them need the Christian Gospel? In a very able address some years ago by the president of the Young Men’s Buddhist Association of Ceylon, defending the purity and adequacy of their religion and contrasting it with the Christian religion, unwittingly answers these questions. He says, “The path which opens the eyes and bestows understanding, which leads to peace of mind, to higher wisdom, to full enlightenment,—all has to be accomplished by one’s own efforts. Evil must be eschewed, the good must be practiced, and the path of emancipation must be trodden each by himself. Here no god nor gods can help man, no rite nor ceremony, no penance or prayer are of any avail. You yourself must make the effort. The Buddhist only points the way.” In other words, Buddhism lays down inexorable laws of conduct and commands men to obey them wholly in their own strength, without help or sympathy from any Divine Being. As this same apostle of Buddhism says further, “Self-help is the keynote of its message. In words which peal forth the utmost convictions of one who has, unaided, fought and won the great battle of self-conquest, the master thus exhorts his disciples: “Renounce

evil, my brethren, and practice that which is good." And there he leaves the poor helpless soul, telling him nothing of the true and living God or sympathizing Saviour, or Heavenly Father, because he knows none.

Thus we perceive that the very best type of the great world religions, if indeed it may be called a religion, is fundamentally lacking as a power to save man from his worst enemy, sin, and to help him in the struggle towards life's goal. Weakness is a universal defect in human nature, and this great cult, with all its excellences, offers no remedy or redress. The same may be said with even greater emphasis of every other ethnic religion. They know no God who is able or cares to help them.

Let it be clearly understood that the motive of Christian missions is today not what it was with most missionary boards a half a century and more ago. The paramount motive then was the conviction that unless the heathen peoples heard and formally accepted the Christian Gospel they would all be hopelessly lost, no matter how high their ideals, or how upright their manner of life. No missionary society or individual missionary of any standing teaches or believes any such sentiment today. It is not to be wondered at that the prog-

ress of missions was so lagging while that motive obtained. It was an insult to the intelligent and upright among non-christian peoples, and it did not appeal to the more thoughtful and charitably minded souls in the Church. It is only since Christian missionaries began to act from higher and more rational motives in giving the Gospel to the non-christian peoples that a wide and profound interest has been awakened in foreign missions among Christians at home.

Another fact in this connection to be kept in mind is that the missionary is not sent out to antagonize the religions of the peoples where he goes. What he finds among them that is true and good he gladly commends and encourages. It is his mission to supplement and improve, rather than supplant, their teachings and ideals. We are sure we have something to offer to the different forms and cults among the non-christian peoples of exceeding great worth, something they will greatly appreciate and gladly appropriate when they once come to understand it. They will and do perceive that it is just what their religions lack to make them effective along all lines of moral and spiritual progress and social betterment. As a matter of fact many among them have already made this discovery, and acted upon it. Unnum-

bered examples could be given to substantiate this fact.

Now what are the things Christians have to take to non-christian peoples of which they are so deplorably lacking? What have we to offer that is so much better than they already have as to make it obligatory for us to take it to them?

In the first place we believe we have a far higher and better conception of God than any of the non-christian religions. Their idea is that God is either identical with the world or universe, or that He is wholly transcendent. In either case He is impersonal and utterly indifferent towards his worshippers. They know nothing of a God who is a universal Father. Some of the more enlightened among them, as the Buddhists, appear to believe in the brotherhood of man; and that is good as far as it goes. But alas! they know nothing of the great source and power of that brotherhood. They know nothing of that great and good God whom Jesus Christ so fully revealed and manifested in His doctrine and life. It is therefore the first work of the missionary to tell the adherents of the other religions of the Father. That is a truth which cannot fail to find a ready response among the more thoughtful and devout. Many, of course, do not believe it at first; but it is a truth that is

bound to take hold sooner or later, because it is what the human heart instinctively craves, and will gladly respond to as soon as deep-seated prejudice is sufficiently removed.

After the Fatherhood of God is made known to them it is the next step to preach the fuller Gospel of the Kingdom; to tell them of their need of a personal Saviour to save them from their sins, and the great sacrifice Christ made in their behalf. This is a prime necessity to any adequate propaganda of the truer religion. There must be some real conviction of sin and guilt before the soul is brought into an attitude before God to receive the full gospel message. That is something no other form of religion emphasizes or adequately sets forth in their symbols of faith and discipline. So far as any of them do decry sin they appeal to motives of fear rather than to the sense of guilt and shame for having disobeyed the law of God. This is characteristic not only of the ethnic religions, but even largely of the religion of the Old Testament. Lawgivers and prophets preached diligently and with great fervor the terrors of the Lord, thundering the commandments of Sinai into the ears of the people till the name of Jehovah became frightful to them; but it failed to produce any deep or lasting conviction of sin and hence little genuine repentance.

Now Christianity, as it came from Christ and His immediate apostles, is not open to this criticism. While it does not fail to lay down the law against sin in all its forms without fear or favor, it does not put undue emphasis on that motive to induce repentance, but turns quickly to the higher motive, that of the sense of indebtedness to God for giving up His beloved Son to die for all His erring children. The great truth that God was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself, not imputing to them their trespasses, suffering with Him equally in the great sacrifice, is far more effective in producing conviction and working repentance in the human heart and life than all the thunderings of Sinai.

There is no missionary dynamic comparable to the Gospel to conquer the human heart. St. Paul reckoned it as the great power of God. To him it was supremely the power of God and the wisdom of God. Writing to the Romans he declared, "I am not ashamed of the gospel; for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth." And this great apostle found it so wherever he went. In every city and town he visited scores of converts were made to Jesus Christ, employing no other motive or dynamic than the Gospel. Of course the apostle did not confine his missionary efforts to the

letter of the Gospel; but he never departed from the spirit of it. He applied it fearlessly to the conditions of the day and peoples among whom he lived and labored. He inveighed against every form of vice and lawlessness before high and low alike. He was also ever ready to respond to the sick and suffering from whatever cause, applying the gospel of healing wherever practicable.

In this respect Paul anticipated the method of our modern missionary boards. Of course he did not have the advantage of our missionaries in this respect. He had no funds nor facilities of any kind for building hospitals, much less for building schools or social centers. But he did organize and establish churches in every city and town, and ordained elders to minister to them. What the great apostle lacked in ways and means he made up, as far as possible, in zeal and self-sacrifice. What is true of St. Paul is no doubt true of the other apostles and first century missionaries to the extent of their ability and power of endurance. We do not hear so much about them and their achievements, but we know enough to assure us that they were not inactive.

The great need of Christian missions among the heathen and other non-Christian peoples is patent to all intelligent and charitably minded men and

women who have given the matter careful attention. Even the most advanced in civilization, like the Hindus and Japanese, are vastly benefited by Christian missions, as thousands among them have borne witness. It awakens in the minds of the more thoughtful a profound sense of the limitations of their own religions; and if they are not at once persuaded to accept and adopt the new and better religion, they are moved to renewed efforts to improve their old religions. The result is not unfrequently, that many of them are led to accept the Christian faith and become themselves home missionaries.

Attention has been called to the indirect testimony for the need of Christian missions by the president of The Young Men's Buddhist Association of Ceylon. In one of his addresses he appeals to liberal Christians to cease sending missionaries to their country to propagate Christianity, but rather to send learned men to assist in supporting the tenets of Buddha, thus practically admitting that their own presentation of the claims of Buddhism was a failure so far as improving conditions among their own people was concerned. The Buddhist president could but see that the work of the Christian missionaries was efficient in that all-important particular. True Christianity never

fails to improve moral conduct wherever it is diligently carried.

From Japan comes similar testimony, only more direct. In a speech delivered by Count Okumo at the semi-centennial celebration of the coming of Protestant Christianity to Japan, he said: "I would not say that our Land has been without religion. Buddhism has prospered greatly here; but this prosperity was largely through political means. Now this creed has been practically rejected by the better classes, who, being spiritually thirsty, have nothing to drink." Count Okumo had come to recognize the adequacy of the Christian Gospel to satisfy this great need.

As to the more benighted regions, like Central Africa, it is the testimony of observing and unbiassed witnesses that even the more imperfect presentation of Christianity is a vast improvement on the religions which obtain there. When Theodore Roosevelt was on his famous hunt in this wild country he improved the opportunity of visiting some of these missions. The picture he draws of conditions among the natives where Christian missionaries have not gone is appalling. It is still a dark continent for the most part; but he shows that where Christian missions have been established a great change for the better is in decided

evidence. "Those who complain or rail at missionary work in Africa, and who confine themselves to pointing out the undoubtedly too numerous errors of missionaries, and the short-comings of their flocks, would do well to consider that even if the light which has been let in is but feeble and gray, it has at least dispelled a worse than Stygian darkness. As soon as native African religions—practically none of which hitherto have evolved any substantial ethical basis—develop beyond the most primitive stage, they tend, notably in middle and western Africa, to grow into malign creeds of unspeakable cruelty and immorality, with a bestial and revolting ritual and ceremonial.

. . . . Even a poorly taught and imperfectly understood Christianity, with its underlying foundation of justice and mercy, represents," he says, "an immeasurable advance on such a creed." In Uganda he notes the greatest possible change for the better. Here under the influence of missionaries who unite disinterestedness and zeal with common sense, the result is astounding. The majority of the people are nominally Christian, and many thousands are sincerely Christian, and they show their Christianity in practical fashion by putting conduct above ceremonial and dogma. And the beauty of it is, he adds, Protestants and Roman

Catholics work together, showing rivalry only in healthy efforts against the common foe.

Witnesses without number are on record to the same effect, all going to show the great need of Christian missions among non-Christian peoples on every continent of the globe and many islands of the sea, and the great benefit they would receive, both spiritual and material. Who can read the explorations and experiences of Dr. Grenfell and his co-workers among the fishermen and Eskimos in Labrador, or those of Bishop Rowe and the late Archdeacon Stuck and the noble men and women associated with them among the natives of Alaska, without being mightily moved by the appalling need of Christian missions in those frigid regions? And the reports of ignorance and superstition and squalor and wretchedness that come to our ears from many parts of China, how our hearts are made to burn and bleed for that much exploited and misruled people!

From every point of the compass we hear the Macedonian cry, "Come over and help us!" Have we any right, have we the heart, to turn deaf ears to that call?

"Where is your heathen brother? From his grave

Near thy own gates, or 'neath a foreign sky,

From the thronged depth of ocean's mourning
wave,

His answering blood reproachfully doth cry,
Blood of thy soul, Can all earth's fountains
make

Thy dark stain disappear? Stewards of God,
awake!" —MRS. SIGOURNEY.

CHAPTER XIII

CHRISTIAN SOCIAL SERVICE

The whole Law of God is summed up in the two great commandments: "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart and with all thy mind and with all thy strength," and, "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself." Thus spoke the divine Founder of Christianity. The major portion of this treatise thus far has been devoted to our duty toward God, the chapter on Missions being the chief exception. The fact is not overlooked, however, that the two duties are so closely related it is not easy to draw the line between them, for the obvious reason that duty toward the one always involves duty to the other. As St. John says, "He that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, cannot love God whom he hath not seen." In an attempted survey of the entire field of the great essentials of Christian obligation it is necessary to treat the two duties separately.

It should also be said in this connection that Christian missions and Christian Social service are so nearly related that either might be made to cover both fields, the chief difference being that missions proper have a wider outlook territorially

and put more stress on the special claims of religion than is usually reckoned as social service. The difference, however, is chiefly in name; for while religion is not, as a rule, kept strictly to social service endeavors, it depends very largely on Christian teaching and associations to deepen and make permanent its hold on the class of persons it is its chief aim to benefit. It is true that social centers and settlements, like those promoted by our public schools, and like Hull House in Chicago, are not distinctively religious; yet we know that they are directly or indirectly instituted by Christian men and women, and that they would never have been undertaken or even thought of apart from the Christian motive and spirit. Apart from Christianity there is very little of the altruistic spirit in the world, though many worldly minded men are ready enough to second a good movement when they see it to be a good business proposition.

But what is meant by social service? The term itself is quite familiar to us all, but to the many it is little more than a name. They have taken too little interest in it to so much as inquire into its aims and ends. If it means anything to them at all it is merely units or centers for social intercourse, recreation, worldly pleasure and amusement; with nothing definite in mind in the way of mental, moral or spiritual development.

But Social Service, as Christians view it, means vastly more than this. It means nothing less than earnest endeavor to fulfill the command, "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself." It means organized and disinterested efforts to ascertain what is defective in the civic, social and industrial world and to find out ways and means to correct it. It means not only the introduction and maintenance of social centers and settlements in cities and towns among the poor and the foreign population where provision is made for instruction in letters, reading, writing, recreation and healthy sports and pastimes for old and young alike; it means that as far as possible and practicable. But it endeavors to go much deeper than that. It means child-welfare from beginning to end. It means seeing that the child is well born and gets a fair start in the world; that it is born of healthy parentage; that it is properly nourished and safeguarded in helpless infancy; that it is carefully taught and disciplined in the principles and duties of life and character. It means the obligation of individuals, churches, schools, guilds, clubs and other benefit associations to work for the improvement of civic, social and industrial conditions generally. It advocates reasonable working hours for all men and shortened hours for women, and for

boys and girls of working age. It means also the persistent endeavor to secure by every reasonable and lawful means a living wage for all men and especially for women who are obliged to earn their own and families' living. It means, too, looking after sanitation in stores, shops, manufactories, schools, public resorts, streets and tenements. It organizes and supports Community Chests and otherwise comes to the relief of the helpless and over-worked, seeing to it that cases of real need only are gratuitously helped, refusing material assistance to those who are manifestly able to support themselves, the aim being to stimulate thrift among the poor and dependent, not to pauperize them.

Social Service also takes a vital interest in securing and in the enforcement of wise temperance laws and ordinances; and now that prohibition is the law of the land, it welcomes that great, if bold, step in the way of help to the good cause, instead of denouncing it as an infringement of personal liberty, after the manner of some who profess to believe in temperance. Why should the demands of self-indulgence be counted as of more importance than the protection of millions of homes and lives from the ravages of this prince of destroyers?

While Christian social service puts forth much energy for the suppression of intemperance and the liquor traffic by the enforcement of temperance laws, it does not depend chiefly on that way of dealing with the evil, but more on creating public sentiment in favor of temperance. It also encourages and supports rescue work in the slums, wars against the "white slave traffic" and all social impurity among high and low alike, opposes loose divorce laws, and discourages hasty marriages; advocates such prison reform as will tend to make prison life conducive to the development of the good impulses of the criminal rather than the baser ones; organizes against "loan sharks" and "wild-cat stock brokers"; opposes bribery among office seekers and unscrupulous politicians, contending for the purity of the ballot and for government by all the people instead of by an "invisible government."

Social Service workers try to make a thorough study of all social and industrial problems, particularly those affected by abnormal conditions and subjects. What best to do to help defectives, delinquents, subnormals, illegitimates and other unfortunates, and how to lessen their number, deeply concerns them, and that not only for the good of the victims themselves, but as well for the protec-

tion of the community and the state against the menace of their presence and increase. These problems are indeed complicated and perplexing, and it is no wonder that many hesitate to grapple with them; but the social service worker does not balk in the face of difficulties.

It is the task of the social service worker to look into the causes of squalor and poverty and to endeavor to find an effective remedy and preventive. He is not content with public charities, city or country, which give but temporary relief at most. He welcomes that as some help. But he seeks most of all to better conditions among the poor and dependent in every possible way. Christian Social Service is concerned chiefly with man's moral and spiritual development, at the same time giving special attention to his physical betterment because so much depends on a healthy body for the normal development of mind and spirit. If it seems at times to give undue attention to that side of his nature it is for the reason that it is usually easier to draw him away from evil associations by an appeal to his natural love of pleasure and pastimes than by a direct appeal to his mental and moral nature. It is indeed quite possible to put undue stress on mere physical culture; but there is also danger of erring on the other side. In former

years the churches confined their efforts to ethical and religious culture, and the schools wholly to mental culture and training; and it is not to be wondered at that they did not gain the hold on either young or old that obtains today. Both seemed oblivious to the fact that an important element or factor in the development of manhood is getting people interested. For this reason churches today build parish houses, equipped with gymnasiums, bowling alleys, and play and reading rooms, as being of little less importance than sanctuaries; and public schools and colleges provide similar facilities for physical training and amusement. In this life, whatever may be true of the life beyond, the soul depends on the body for its very existence. So to look after the soul's health to the neglect of the body is like looking for fruit in sterile ground. St. Paul says the body is the temple of the Holy Ghost; therefore the body should be kept healthy and as full of vigor as possible. There have indeed been fairly well developed souls in frail bodies in spite of the handicap; but they will tell you of the great disadvantage at which they labored.

From what has been said it is obvious that Christian social service has distinctively in mind the salvation of the whole man, not his spiritual nature only. It is not content with saving a soul

here and there, "snatching it as a brand from the eternal burning," as it seemed to be with some branches of the Church in years gone by. It looks to the individual indeed, but not more for the sake of the individual than for the sake of the community in which he lives. In the Society of God the individual counts only to the extent in which he interests himself in the general good. If one is content to save himself only he loses himself. This is the law of the Kingdom. "Ye are members one of another". For this reason it is not sufficient that one refrain from wronging another by some overt or wilful act or speech; one is under obligation to protect others in their rights as far as practicable, that all may have an equal opportunity to succeed in life. This does not mean that one should use undue haste in coming to his neighbors' relief or rescue. There is such a thing as making one's self too officious in espousing his neighbors' cause. But it does mean that one should always be alive and ready to give timely assistance.

As has already been said. Social service workers try to make a careful study of industrial conditions. Therefore they are deeply concerned about unemployment, a condition which all too often confronts them. Unemployment is not only bad for the unemployed, bringing, as sooner or later it

must, suffering and distress to the family and the home; that is indeed a serious consideration. To be out of work means soon to be out of money and facing the peril of hunger, cold and nakedness. People who have never experienced such a condition little realize the darkness and despair confronting the man who is out of work as he looks into the face of wife and children with no prospect of earning, or of otherwise obtaining, an honest living for them. All this is deplorable enough. But there is even a worse feature to unemployment. Protracted idleness tends to lessen virility, weaken the will and impair efficiency of both the man himself and that of his children. It is also the fruitful source of unrest, discontent, disorder and sometimes industrial revolution. Then, again, unemployment not unfrequently, or at least all too often, ends up in vagrancy—in unlawful and disreputable ways of maintaining actual existence. The old saying, “The world owes me a living and if I can’t get it honestly I will get it some other way,” has apparently become law and gospel to a no inconsiderable number of men long out of work.

But however many or few of the unemployed fall into these evil ways, there is no doubt that wide-spread unemployment is a condition that furnishes a problem for social service workers

which, however complicated and difficult, must be grappled with and as far as possible solved. It is not the province of this article to suggest or recommend ways and means to solve this problem. That is a task for wiser and more experienced minds. Besides, the cause or causes of the evil are so many and varied that nothing short of a good deal of hard thinking and adventure on the part of many, and that with much patience and perseverance, may hope ever to solve the problem, that is, change conditions so that supply and demand may always compare favorably.

No doubt one of the causes, if not the chief cause, of unemployment is the present-day strife between capital and labor, growing out of the selfishness and unreasonableness of one or the other or both. Sometimes capitalists finding great demand for their goods one year employ every available worker, even scouring the country far and wide for them; but as soon as the market for their goods begins to decline they are not sportsmanlike enough to stand a little loss in order to keep their men at work. Again it may be and doubtless often is the fault of the laborers who make it a point to give the smallest possible return for their wages while at work, making it impossible for the employer to pay them wages during the declining

market. There can be little doubt also that ill considered strikes are frequently responsible for long periods of unemployment, as they tend to discourage enterprising business men from taking chances.

It is obvious from these facts and considerations that the task of Social Service is to devise ways and means to break up this unholy rivalry between capital and labor—to make them both see that their interests are common, and that to work against each other is to work against their own best interests. This is indeed a difficult task; and one reason is that when a man finds himself or succeeds in getting himself into the capitalist class, unless he is a true Christian in spirit, he withdraws or withdraws fellowship from the working class altogether; and that very naturally creates feeling which hardens into envy and bitterness. The result is industrial disturbance with financial loss to the employer and little demand for labor, and lower wages for those who find employment.

Evidently existing organizations of capital and labor will never solve the problem of unemployment alone, for the simple reason that the two organizations act as rivals and not as partners in the concern. Not till the two organizations get together and study with open and sympathetic minds each others' interests and show a willing-

ness to share in profit or loss as the case may be, remembering that "community of interests is social salvation", will the perplexing problem ever be solved.

Such as outlined in this chapter is the stupendous task of social and industrial reformers. On its face it looks like a mountain. But mountains have been removed, and this one may be. To doubt it is to doubt the superiority of virtue and goodness. It requires but faith and perseverance on the part of the servants of God. The day may be distant, but the time must and will come when brain and brawn will learn to work hand in hand, even as they were designed to by their Creator.

No attempt has been made in this essay to compass the entire field of Christian Social Service. The field is very large. There are many books by much abler writers devoted wholly to this and kindred subjects. Our only aim has been to say sufficient to make the point that this form of service to humanity is one of the great essentials of the Christian religion. It is not implied that it is required of every Christian to take an active part in every line of social service work; that would not be possible. But it *is* the part of everyone to show some practical interest in bettering conditions in the social, civic and industrial world. No

one has a right to say that he is in no sense his neighbor's keeper. When Jesus was setting forth the plain and all-important conditions of eternal life He made no reference to creed, dogma or ritual, but gave solemn utterance to the parable of the Judgment, or the Sheep and the Goats. He made Himself one with the hungry, the naked and destitute, the sick and the imprisoned, the stranger and every other unfortunate; declaring that they who neglected them neglected Him, and that they who remembered them remembered Him, and on that basis final judgment would be rendered, and that, too, whether or not they knew Him.

CHAPTER XIV

CHRISTIAN EDUCATION

The Importance of Religious Education has always been recognized by the Christian Church, but not until more recent years has it been recognized and treated as essential to the Christian life. It was the belief of the many that while the ability to read the Bible was a good thing for a Christian to have, one could be just as good and happy a Christian without any education whatever. The all-important thing was to "get religion", which meant little more in most cases than pious fervor aroused by impassioned preaching and great unction in prayer and singing, a fervor which soon died out after the period of special effort and excitement was over. It had little or nothing to do with character building, or with stimulating the sense of responsibility in the sight of God for the improvement of moral conditions in one's community, or for the extension of the Kingdom of God in the wider field. It was not because one desired or determined primarily to live for high ideals and become a more useful man in the world, but because he feared that if he should die before taking the step he would be not only denied entrance at heaven's gate, but would be hopelessly lost.

Now we all must agree, those of us who have made a serious study of the gospels, that such a conception of religion is utterly repugnant to the teachings of Jesus Christ. It is a thoroughly self-seeking kind of religion, defeating its own end. Jesus taught by precept and by parable that all self-seeking is self-losing; but these religionists preached and believed that the all-important end of becoming a Christian was to make good their escape from future punishment and secure their admission into the heavenly mansions at the last great day. The idea of being a Christian for the sake of honoring God and making themselves benefactors among men was little if at all in evidence.

Of course the Church as a whole has always given some attention to the religious training of her children, requiring them to learn at least the Lord's Prayer, the Apostles' Creed and the Ten Commandments. It has also for many years maintained Church, or Sunday Schools in most parishes, in which a few men and a larger number of women and girls have taken a more or less active interest as officers and teachers. But upon more than this the Church has not insisted. It has apparently been content for the most part to have the laity attend and support its regular services and to make an occasional offering to missions.

So indifferent has the generality of the membership of the Church been toward religious instruction that few of them subscribe for or read their own Church papers or other religious literature. The result is that religion, instead of being the chief concern of the laity, is with most of them a mere side interest; business, current events, pleasure and pastime almost wholly absorbing their time and attention.

It is a profound source of gratitude that in recent years steps have been taken by the Church to correct this lack of active interest in religious education. What was for so many years almost chaos has taken on definite form. We have now in the Church a "General Board of Religious Education", thoroughly organized and officered, to oversee and direct the religious instruction of the children and youth and to interest as far as possible the entire membership. It aims to unify and coordinate all available sources and agencies for instruction in righteousness. It studies methods and devises ways and means for reaching the largest possible number, not only of the children of the Church, but also of the unchurched wherever found. It undertakes to develop wise leadership and to prepare competent teachers for the Church schools, providing them with nurture series and

other helps, and in every way to make the Church school an integral factor in the work of extending the Kingdom of God.

But why insist on the religious education of the children and youth of the Church and the land, not to speak of those of maturer years, and why should it be maintained that no one's education is complete or adequate who has not learned the cardinal doctrines of the Christian life? The answer has already been indicated in this article. It is to counteract ignorance of the truth and of the claims of religion, to correct erroneous and misleading ideas and impressions which the uninstructed have received and are wont to hold as to what Christianity is and as to what Christians are expected to believe and do. The ignorance in the world and even in the Church along this line is appalling. Even among those commonly reckoned as educated people, graduates of high schools and colleges, the most crude and primitive views are held on the subject of religion. This is in part owing to the crass teachings of mediaeval and more modern schools and religious cults; but even more directly to lack of early parental and home training and the character of the schools and institutions which they have attended, schools which either teach no religion at all, or treat it as of so

little importance as to give it no place in their curriculum.

It is true that in the mediaeval Church religious education was not neglected. On the contrary the Roman Catholic Church was most diligent and scrupulous in instructing their children in what they deemed essential to the Christian life. As Dr. McGiffert says, "Catholicism was not only a complex of theological doctrine, but also a well-defined system of moral teaching. Indeed the teaching was its most important point. The whole career of the Christian was carefully regulated, and with its ethical code, its confessional and its penitential discipline, the Church afforded constant instruction in the conduct of life." But unfortunately the instruction which the Church afforded had too little of the spirit of the Gospel to prove of permanent worth to the masses. It failed to hold up the highest motives and ideals, making sacraments and masses and other rites and ceremonies of supreme importance in the endeavor to meet the approval of God. When the Reformation came, while this fault was to some extent corrected, the reformers went to the other extreme of making moral conduct secondary and faith in the atonement the all-important condition of salvation. "The dogma of a present salvation by faith alone

meant the repudiation of righteousness by works and the consequent relegation of instruction in morals to a wholly subordinate place.” (McGiffert).

As an illustration of the crude ideas of the uninstructed on the subject of religion, take, among others, the doctrine of God. Almost all men believe in the existence of some supreme Being in the universe; but how few have any clear understanding of the Christian conception of God! To most men, as He is to children, He is a monster being, wholly transcendent and dwelling far apart from his creatures, taking little or no interest in the affairs of men and concerned chiefly for his own glory. He is a great King and potentate, severely exacting, and having little if any pleasure in the welfare and happiness of his creatures. They know practically nothing about Him as a Father and find no joy in serving Him. Now if they had been from the first carefully instructed in the doctrine of God they would think of Him as being almost the exact opposite of this crude conception of the Deity. They would think of Him in the light of Jesus Christ, as being wholly like Him in sympathy and good will toward his children. They would know Him as their Father and their Friend. He would mean to them just what He is so plainly revealed to us in the Gospel to be, a God of love

unbounded and finding his highest joy in their repentance and eternal salvation.

Take, again, the conception of the Church. As a matter of fact it is little wonder that such erroneous views of the meaning and purpose of the Church are entertained by many people. The unhappy divisions deplored in a former chapter have very naturally confused the minds of old and young, leading many to treat with indifference membership in it. They have come to the conclusion that because of this apparent chaotic state of Christendom the Church has no claim upon them, and that they can be just as good Christians outside as in. That the Church as a whole is a Divine institution and as such essential to the perpetuity of the religion of Jesus Christ in the world is little understood by the masses of mankind. It is therefore of vital importance that old and young be taught and made to understand that the Church is the Body of Christ, his continued Incarnation in the world, and that every member thereof sustains some such relation to Christ as the hands and feet and tongue of a man sustain to the rest of his body, and that neither of those members can function if detached therefrom. The Church is an institution designed and fitted to synthesize and direct the gifts and powers of man in the service of

God and his fellow men. It is an educatory and working institution as well as an institution for worship and fellowship. Christian education aims to set every one right on the idea of the Church, making them understand that it is something radically different from every other association of men or women in the world, that it is not an insurance organization or order, membership of which is a guarantee to an eternal inheritance; nor a guild or club for mutual benefit or social enjoyment, though not excluding these; but rather the combination of a school and a workshop, in which learning and service go hand in hand. This is far from being well understood and appreciated by the many, and so right along this line there is a vast field for religious educators; for it is their work not only to enlighten the mind of child and youth, but as well to set them at work in some capacity of usefulness and helpfulness in the Kingdom of God. As some member of the Board of Religious Education has definitely expressed it, "Its curriculum consists not merely in subjects to be learned, but of activities to be developed, habits to be formed, and ideals to be created."

Take again, for illustration, the meaning of the Christian life. What crude and inadequate ideas seem to obtain among very many among us! They

dissociate it almost entirely from its relation to the present life. It has little or nothing to do with that which makes life a valuable asset in this world. They would give it no attention whatever did they not fear the neglect of it would imperil their hope of future safety. To them it sustains little or no relation to character or personal worth; much less does it mean any positive obligation on their part toward bettering conditions beyond the bounds of their own immediate circle. What care they for missions, home or foreign, or for the spiritual uplift of society or state? They have no ears to hear the appeals for sympathy and help in these directions. But had they been properly instructed in early life in regard to these claims of the Gospel they would not only have a better understanding of the meaning of the Christian life, they would gladly give a ready response to the calls for service along every line. They would not be idlers in the vineyard of the Lord, much less parasites. You cannot expect the many to become interested in the things they have never had thoroughly explained to them. The vast majority of those who are ignorant of the doctrines and duties of religion are not so from actual choice, but because their religious education has been neglected in the home and the Church. They have not had the opportunity to learn.

Here then is a vast field for Christian teachers, and their duties carry them beyond the bounds of Church and parish schools. They must find their way if possible into prayerless homes and public schools and colleges and wherever else religion is unknown or neglected. The task is not an easy one, but it is being done in some localities, and if persisted in may become widespread.

This suggests the important consideration that religious education is designed not only to inculcate the truths and duties of religion, but as well to safeguard religion itself. As Bishop Brent has well said, “Education without religion is education without a soul.” There are few things more to be deprecated than education unsafeguarded by the sanctions of religion. Nations and peoples that have put education to the fore and relegated religion to a position of secondary moment have sooner or later come to grief. Greece in the days of the Sophists furnishes an illustration of making speculation and secular learning everything and religion practically nothing. It meant the loss of her high ideals and with it her moral decline and national disruption. While retaining the form of religion and building altars to a multiplicity of gods, they became skeptical and atheistic in fact. France, in her revolt against the domination of the Roman

heirarchy during the reign of Louis XVI, and practically renouncing all religion as a nation, furnishes another illustration of the peril of trusting to the wisdom of men alone to maintain good government. It meant a long period of moral degeneracy and national weakness. And Russia, under an infidel soviet government, dominated by the well educated Lenine and Trotzky, is proof beyond controversy of the unnatural progeny of mere learning without the safeguard of religion. In the soul of a man or a nation that fears and honors God education is a great asset; but in the soul of an evil-minded man or nation it is diabolical. The most dangerous criminal in the world is the educated criminal; for he is able to apply his superior knowledge of men and affairs to prey upon his victims. As a manipulator of stocks and bonds he is a prince among gamblers, and as a bank robber and embezzler he knows only too well how to cover up his tracks. If a little learning is a dangerous thing, how much more learning without religion!

It is true there have been some note-worthy exceptions to this rule—some great and good men and women who have lived years in doubt and died without faith in the existence of God or the hope of immortality. Such were John Stuart Mill and Harriet Martineau, and also August Compte,

their teacher, and others who could be named, and whom we may well concede as worthy to be enrolled among the excellent of the earth. They were avowed infidels and even atheists, and believed that education and scientific learning, without supernatural religion, were sufficient to guide mankind into all attainable usefulness and happiness—to furnish adequate motives to a just and good life. And they exemplified the supposed reasonableness of their doctrines by their exceptional conduct before the world, and finally died without a stain on their character or memory.

But can it truthfully be said that these noble souls were in no sense or degree indebted to religion for the exceptional lives they lived and for the philanthropy and disinterestedness for which they were noted? Let us look at the facts a moment. It is well known that Compte was a normal child of the Church throughout his youth, and drank deeply at the fountain of truth before materialism attracted his attention. It is said that "his wife of whom he was almost a worshipper, redoubled his sentimentality, and with his heart colored by an early religion and a semi-religious domestic love, he wrought out a religion of humanity as being the greatest pursuit of earth. Could the philosophy of atheism have so colored his soul?" Harriet

Martineau was also a devout disciple of the Church and was thirty years of age before she learned to reject the supernatural revelations of the Gospels and the Divinity of Christ. Her first, which are always the deepest impressions, were made by Christianity; and though in later years she became, under the depression of a too formal religion, a materialist and unbeliever, her whole life was colored by the lessons she learned at the altars of the established Church.

But what about John Stuart Mill? He was not reared at the portals of the sanctuary. His father was a pronounced infidel and atheist, and diligently instilled his irreligious tenets in the mind of his precocious son. How shall we account for the exemplary life he is reputed to have lived? The answer is, Though his father was an infidel, he was not the distinguished scientist's only teacher. He was also a disciple of Compte, and an almost worshipper of Harriet Martineau. The high moral sentiments he entertained he drew more from these apostate children of the Church than from his infidel father. Thus indirectly, but none the less potentially, was his life and character moulded by the peerless doctrines and precepts of Christianity. As Professor Swing once said, to whom the writer is indebted largely for the facts and conclusions

recorded in this and the preceding paragraphs, Mill "did not acquire his lofty style from atheism, but from a crumbling temple of piety, when the last hymns of worship were still haunting his sad spirit."

It argues to no purpose, therefore, that because some infidels have been noble and good, true religion is not the chief and most fruitful source of righteousness. The universality of religion has made it practically impossible for intelligent minds to spring up and good characters to be formed out from under the influence of the temples of religion.

From the above facts and arguments are we not justified in the conclusion that neither religion nor education is a permanent boon to mankind when functioning independently one of the other? They were never intended to grow in separate gardens. The offspring of either alone are bastards and not sons. They are an unnatural and deformed progeny, and as such a menace to civilization. The one nurtures superstition, fanaticism, despotism, cruelty, oppression, sectarian bigotry and intolerance, hatred, revenge and even murder in the name of its deity; the other breeds and stimulates deception, embezzlement, fraud, graft, profiteering and other high crimes and misdemeanors. The one is intolerant and the other is intolerable. For both salvation and safety the two must be joined in

permanent union and concord. Thus will they prove true yoke-fellows in bringing about the redemption of humanity.

CHAPTER XV

IMPORTANT, IF NOT ESSENTIAL

There are a number of doctrines appertaining to the Christian religion, some of which have comforted and inspired many thoughtful souls, and all of which have exercised the minds of many at one time or another, not dwelt on at length, if at all, in the body of this book, for the reason that wide differences of opinion and interpretation have been and still are held by accredited Christians concerning them. Prominent among these are the Trinity, Miracles, Apocalypticism, Mysticism, the doctrine of devils, and the limits of probation.

The first named of these doctrines, that of the Trinity of the Godhead, while nowhere definitely stated in the Scriptures, is so plainly implied that it would seem there could be no reasonable grounds for doubt of its merit as an article of faith in the creeds of the Church. Certainly Divine attributes are repeatedly ascribed alike to the Father, the Son, and to the Holy Ghost; and as there is but one God, so the Three must be in some mystical sense united in the One. There would seem to be no other alternative. But as there are those who cannot honestly receive this doctrine as an article

of their faith, yet give every other evidence of loyalty to Christ, the author has not thought it necessary to class it among the great essentials of the Christian faith.

But how about miracles? Can one be a consistent Christian and not believe that Christ wrought actual miracles during his ministry? That must depend on what one understands a miracle to imply. If one understands a miracle to imply a flat contradiction of the laws of nature, then one may reasonably doubt that Jesus wrought miracles; for Jesus certainly contravened no law of nature. That would have been to contradict Himself. Because we may not be able to understand or explain how He controlled and applied the laws of nature to heal the sick, open the eyes of the blind, feed the hungry and raise the dead, is not sufficient grounds for doubting his power to do these wonderful deeds. In every age men of genius and research have found ways and means of pitting one law of nature against another to accomplish certain marvelous results. We are living today in the enjoyment of utilities and facilities, owing to the inventive genius of men, which would have been looked upon at an earlier day and age as impossible as some of the miracles recorded of Christ's ministry look to us today. But if we believe He had the

power of God at his command far beyond that of ordinary men then we ought not to think it impossible that He should have had the ability to turn the laws of nature in any direction of mercy which appealed to his great nature. As one testified of Him in his day, "He could do the wonders that He did because God was with Him." (John 3:2.) The greatest miracle after all was Jesus Himself, and that too, whether we accept the authenticity of the Infancy stories of the gospels in every particular or not; for his whole life was a marvelous manifestation of the power and goodness of God. But as He Himself put far less stress on his miracles than He did on His example and teachings, one does not necessarily deny Him as his Lord who is not fully persuaded that He wrought miracles. He may not be consistent, but he is not necessarily unChristian.

Some may wonder why what has come to be called Apocalypticism has not been classed in this treatise as one of the great essentials of the Christian faith. Referring as it does to the personal and visible coming and reign of Christ on earth in the near or distant future, it is surely a matter of no minor importance. Why then has it been left out of the reckoning as one of the great essentials? The answer is because it is so difficult to understand

and because those who think they understand it differ so widely in their interpretations. The New Testament writers do not agree among themselves in every detail. At first they looked for the personal return of the Lord in their day; yet they believed He was with them in full power and sympathy from the very beginning of their active ministry, in accordance with His promise to be with them always, even to the end of the age. How they reconciled this dual conception of his appearing and presence we are not informed. He was always with them, yet he was still to come. Later, when He failed to appear in visible form as they expected, they came to the conclusion that He must have decided to postpone his advent on account of His long-suffering, giving the impenitent more time to make up their minds to turn from their sins. Is it not possible that they misunderstood Him both as to the time and the nature of His advent, that while they were right in looking for His speedy coming in fact, they were wrong in expecting Him to come in material and visible form to reign like other monarchs of the earth, differing from them only in the purity and vastly greater power of his reign? But whatever may have been their way of looking for His advent it did not hinder them from living and mightily working in the consciousness of His presence and power.

That there is a great underlying truth in the doctrine of apocalypticism there is every evidence. It witnesses to the certain and unfailing presence of the risen Christ with His people, that He is in the world for salvation and righteous judgment, and that He is leaving nothing undone to bring the City of God into the world and to establish it on a solid foundation among the children of men. Probably all that is essential to the doctrine of apocalypticism is implicit in the chapters on the Resurrection, the Ascension, the Holy Spirit, and the Church. That it means far more than is intimated in this chapter the author is fully persuaded.

As regards Mysticism, a sentiment or truth which has had a very strong hold on many of the most highly inspired apostles and teachers of religion in all periods, much might be said in favor of making it one of the great essentials of the Christian faith. As defined by one of its leading modern exponents, "Mysticism is the science of the soul as it ventures into the higher life of the Spirit," or, "the art of union with Reality. A mystic is one who has attained that union in a greater or less degree; or one who aims at and believes in its attainment." (Evelyn Underhill.) In the light of this definition mysticism must be reckoned as most significant, and highly worthy of the serious

consideration of every Christian. We know that our Lord was first and chief among mystics in His day. He most certainly attained and enjoyed union with the Great Reality, for He attained and enjoyed perfect union with His Father. Whether the apostles and evangelists knew that they were mystics or not, some of them, we are sure, made great progress in the mystic art, for their writings are replete with evidences of it. Paul and John certainly rose to high eminence in the spiritual life. They drank very deeply at that well of water which evermore springs up unto everlasting life. And had it not been for the long list of mystics that arose during the long dark period of mediaeval Christianity the Church would scarcely have survived its enemies within and without.

The writer of this book has been a deeply interested student of mysticism for many years and is thoroughly persuaded of its great underlying truth, but believing that all that is actually essential to be received by a disciple of Christ as to the content of mysticism is implied in the chapter on the Holy Spirit, and realizing that many good Christians disavow being in any sense mystics, mistakingly associating it with Christian Science, theosophy, new thought, occultism or some other proposed substitute for Christianity, he has not

deemed it expedient to make it the topic of a separate chapter.

Another doctrine, or problem, which has not been made the topic of a separate chapter in this book is that pertaining to the devil or Satan so often mentioned in the Scriptures. That there is abundant evidence of the presence and powerful influence of base and malicious forces in the world opposing God and all righteousness, and apparently, if not deliberately, aiming to overthrow the Divine government, cannot be denied nor ignored. Now the question is, Does the Christian faith require one to believe in the actual existence of a personal devil second only in wisdom and power to Almighty God? Is there no possible escape from the Gnostic and Manichaeian dualism of the second century which practically recognized the existence of a good God and an evil god in the universe contending fiercely as competitors for dominion over the bodies and souls of men? A literal interpretation of numerous passages of Scripture would seem to sustain this unpalatable theory. But are we obliged to take these passages in their most literal sense? May we not make some allowance for Oriental imagery and the almost universal belief in a good and an evil deity in the world? That Jesus used the same terminology does not neces-

sarily mean that He believed in this form of dualism, but that He deemed it not wise to attempt too much in the way of correcting beliefs that were so deeply rooted in human nature as this error, even as He did not try to correct their inherited ideas on the use of strong drink, the right to hold slaves and the belief in the divine right of kings. It was his special work to sow good seed and to create ideals which would eventually dissipate in the minds of men all false beliefs and evil practices. The high ideals of justice and self-control and the equality of all men in the sight of God which He ever held up have borne good fruit in the abolition of slavery in all parts of the civilized world, the passing of wise and increasingly effective temperance laws in this and other well-governed countries and in dealing a death-blow to the obsession of the divine right of kings. Is it not a fact that it would be difficult to find today in any school of learning, sacred or secular, a pronounced believer in a personal devil in the sense entertained by theologians of an earlier day? That there are evil spirits in the world, embodied and possibly unembodied, we see too many evidences in the words and deeds of mankind to doubt or deny. But they are the spirits of wicked and designing men and women yet in the world and possibly of departed spirits

that in some mysterious way are able to haunt the living. An apostle characterizes them as the world-rulers of this darkness, spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenlies. (Eph. 6.)

Probably as good a definition of the concept “devil” or “Satan” as has ever been given is that by Dr. Horace Bushnell in his great treatise on “Nature and the Supernatural,” (pp. 134-5). “Satan, or the devil, is not the name of any particular person, neither is it a personation merely of temptation or impersonal evil in the sense of moral evil; but the name is a name that generalizes bad persons or spirits, with their bad thoughts and characters, many in one. That there is any single one of them who, by distinction or pre-eminence, is called Satan or the devil, is wholly improbable. The name is one taken up by the imagination to designate or embody, in a conception the mind can most easily wield, the all or total of bad minds or powers.”

But whether or not we accept this or any other theory of the powers of evil, it is certain that moral evil does exist in the world from whatever source it may come, and that the Christian has no alternative than to recognize the fact and in the power of the Divine Spirit to resist it. It is not required of us to hold or to attain to strictly correct views of

the origin or the direct cause of evil, but recognizing the fact that it does exist, to see that it does not get the dominion over us.

Still another subject which has not been treated as an essential in our reckoning, though a matter of grave and absorbing interest to many minds in all periods of Christian history, is that of Probation in its relation to final salvation and destiny. Traditional theology, interpreting the words of Christ and the apostles in their most literal and merciless sense, has made short work of this question by declaring the certainty that all souls departing this life without openly confessing Christ are doomed to endless death or punishment for the sins committed here on the earth. That there were always thoughtful and charitable minds to whom this dogma was and is repugnant there is abundant evidence, and it has without doubt kept many of them out of the historic Church. Today it would not be easy to find a Christian so heartless and hopeless as to defend such a cruel dogma. But the question is. Has not the reaction gone so far as to encourage many to entertain the hope that all souls will be finally saved regardless of how selfish and debased they may have become in this life? It is contended by some that God having brought into life all mankind, if He is a God of

justice and love, is under moral obligation to save all, and therefore must have power so to do. But the question is, Can even God, having created man free to think and choose for himself, overpower the selfish and determined rebellious will in him and make him fit for fellowship with the saints in the heavenly state in spite of his self and determined will? Then there is the further question; If a man, in the face of every appeal of reason and mercy, deliberately and defiantly follows his selfish and sinful inclinations till he becomes as it were case-hardened what has God to build on in such a soul? No one has put this sentiment clearer or more forcibly than Dr. Mason in his "Faith of the Gospel": (pp. 412-13.) "The lost may be 'many,' or 'few'; for these are relative terms, (Lk. 13:23-24); but whether many or few, they will be lost, not because God would not elect them to partake of his grace, nor because his Spirit was weary of striving with them and gave them up before they were fully tested, nor because they failed to comply with a standard that was beyond them, nor because they mistook the meaning of the Gospel and held back from it. All who are lost will be lost by their own fault, not because they were weak, unimaginative, or stupid; but because they were wicked,—because when conscience appealed to them, they silenced

it,—because they wilfully quenched what light they had,—because they chose what was wrong, knowing it was wrong, and preferring it to the right,—and that not once or twice, but persistently, and with increasing persistence, and to the end, until they have destroyed in themselves the faculties which might have expanded into faith, hope and charity, which are the life of the soul. They will be lost because they have fixed and determined their characters for evil; so that all good that could be offered them further would only be made food for fresh evil."

In reply to this reasoning of Mason some will be ready to say, Does it not after all delimit the power and wisdom and benevolence of God in bringing into this world immortal souls which He cannot save against their will? The author of this volume does not so think, and his reasons may be inferred from the chapters on the Being and Character of God. He believes in the infinite wisdom and power and goodness of God and that He was justified in all his works of creation from the beginning. In his wisdom and goodness He created man a free moral agent, thereby making absolute control of his will impossible. In so doing He showed man favor above every other creature on the footstool. He put the attainment of the highest degree

of usefulness and happiness within his reach. He holds out every possible incentive to move him to choose wisely and proffers him every possible source of helpfulness. That He has done and will do all that can be done to save every soul from sin and its direful consequences there can be no reasonable question. Whether the time will ever come when every soul will yield his self-will to the Divine will the author is in grave doubt. Neither Christ nor his apostles held out any hope for the selfish and incorrigible; and why should we? At the same time the author would not call it a mortal sin to hope for the final salvation of all mankind.

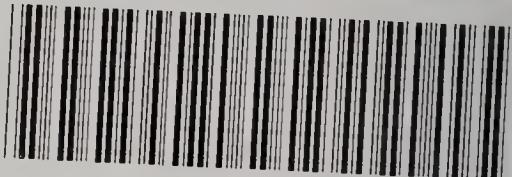
Our last word is, Take no chances; Repent and receive the Gospel, that you may be set free from all selfishness and every other form of unrighteousness, and be filled with that purity and goodness of God apart from which no man may see the Lord.

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